

MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION: CASE STUDY  
COMPARISON OF THE MENSALÃO AND PETROLÃO  
CORRUPTION SCANDALS IN BRAZIL

by

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## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

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This thesis explores the conditions under which corruption scandals generate large-scale public backlash using a comparative case study of the *Mensalão* and *Petrolão* corruption scandals in Brazil. Drawing on public opinion data and content analysis of newspaper coverage of scandals, it explores the effects of a number of factors in shaping public reaction to corruption scandals, including economic climate, type of corruption, and media framing. The findings indicate that while media engages in first order agenda setting – establishing corruption scandals as important events – it only sometimes engages in second order agenda setting by framing corruption scandals and politicians in a positive or negative light. In addition, the data reveals that in Brazil, the state of the economy is a strong determining factor that shapes public perceptions concerning the importance of corruption as a major issue. Lastly, the results indicate that the Brazilian public did not distinguish between the different types of corruption, and instead protested and demanded the end of corruption generally.

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“A grande corrupção, ela é uma serial killer que mata disfarçado de buracos em estrada,  
de falta de medicamentos, e de crimes de rua.”

“Corruption is a serial killer disguised as potholes, lack of medicine, and street crime.”

Deltan Dallagnol  
Federal Prosecutor  
*Lava Jato* Task Force

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Two major political corruption scandals have recently engulfed Brazil eliciting mass media attention both nationally and internationally. The first scandal, known as the *Mensalão*, encompassed vote buying in Congress utilizing public funds to pay for political support from coalition parties. The second scandal, referred to as the *Petrolão*, revolves around *Petrobras*, Brazil's largest oil company, and a bribery scheme for obtaining lucrative construction project contracts. Corruption does not represent anything new in Brazil, although the scale and the systematic implementation of the political corruption schemes over the last decade are unprecedented. When the first corruption scandal was revealed in 2005, relatively little large-scale public backlash ensued, and the president Lula da Silva remained extremely popular in the public's perception. However, when the second corruption scandal emerged in 2014, millions of Brazilians took to the streets across Brazil and around the globe in protest, calling for the impeachment of the president Dilma Rousseff and an end to corruption.

This leads us to ask, in a country with longstanding, systemic corruption, why do some corruption scandals lead to widespread public discontent and others produce little public reaction? Under what conditions will revelations of corruption lead to acceptance and apathy and under what conditions will it lead to protests in the streets? This study draws on a comparative case study of the *Mensalão* and *Petrolão* scandals, public opinion data, and content analysis of newspaper coverage of scandals to explore the effects of a number of factors in shaping public reaction to corruption scandals including economic climate, type of corruption, and media framing.



## **National and Scandal Context**

Corruption has long been an issue in the Brazilian political sphere, ranging from pork-barrel politics to vote-buying for the formation of coalitions to personal graft and kickbacks. According to Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranks countries by perceived levels of corruption based on surveys of business and other experts, Brazil ranks 79<sup>th</sup> out of 176 countries with a score of 40 out of 100 (0 correlates with highly corrupt and 100 very clean). This indication of systemic corruption in Brazil is detrimental in many regards and has vast political, economic, and social consequences, particularly in terms of achieving developmental goals. Brazil's soft power influence as one of the BRICs nations depends greatly upon the quality of its democratic institutions (Sotero & Armijo, 2007), whose legitimacy can be dramatically affected by corrupt practices. When permeated throughout political institutions, corruption creates unnecessary red tape, political inefficiency, and diminishes public trust in democratic institutions. Corruption can also hinder economic growth, interfere with international development aid, weaken the effectiveness of judicial institutions, hamper the efficiency and quality of public services, perpetuate hierarchies of high levels of inequality, and contribute to escalating discontent – which can lead to instability and violence.

In this manner, corruption poses tremendous threats due to the manifold negative social consequences. Public perception of high levels of corruption within leading institutions generate popular discontent and can foster a climate in which mass social uprising can manifest. In Brazil, this occurred during the large-scale protests that erupted in 2013 before the FIFA World Cup, in 2015 during the Rio Summer Olympics,

and in 2016 surrounding the former president Dilma Rousseff's impeachment. From personal experience as a Brazilian-American who has traveled extensively to Brazil, I believe that Brazilians accept corruption as part of the political landscape – something unavoidable and pervasive. Citizens commonly believe that corruption permeates political institutions and that little to nothing can be done to solve the issue in the short term. This thought pattern often justifies corruption on a small scale, especially if it advances personal gain.

How then should we view public outcry in the face of corruption scandals? On the one hand, media coverage of corruption scandals foster public discontent that can lead to instability due to a lack of trust in political leaders, and might weaken the public's faith in democratic institutions. Yet public outcry is also essential in the fight against corruption as it pressures the government to root out dishonest officials and reform institutions. Although it comes with risks, then, public discontent in the face of corruption may ultimately be seen as positive.

Yet levels of tolerance of the current state of affairs and public outcry in the face of corruption scandals varies over time, for reasons that remain underexplored in the literature. This paper can serve as a step towards understanding this variance and challenging Brazilians' fatalistic views regarding the necessary persistence of corruption. Its findings will have implications not only for our understanding of public perception of corruption in Brazil, but in other countries that suffer from systemic corruption as well. Below I explore the existing literature's predictions regarding the influence of three sets of factors on public perceptions of corruption scandals: type of corruption, economic context, and media coverage and framing.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Defining and Categorizing Corruption**

Defining corruption is a contested task, as a definition necessarily entails narrowing an idea to include certain elements at the expense of others. For my thesis I utilize the most common definition of corruption: “the abuse of public office for private gain” (Bussell, 2015). This definition indicates that a public official misuses his/her assigned power, but does not address other components involved in the discourse, such as the issues of morality and legality. On the one hand, the ethical dimension can be intrinsic to corruption as a corrupt act reflects an immoral behavior that deviates from societal expectations. Yet on the other hand, corruption can also be separated from morality, and whether a given action is ethical or not may not be critical in certain contexts. The link between corruption and morality relates particularly to culture and to different religions (Cockroft, 2012). Since certain traditions place a higher emphasis on ethical behavior than others, a definition in which morality is central does not make sense in a society that does not maintain the same value system.

The second dimension that the previous definition excludes relates to legality. If the definition of corruption includes a direct connection between corruption and legality, then the attention focuses only on condemning illegal practices but does not consider actions that are legal but corrupt in nature. This poses challenges for a cross-national dialogue because there are certain practices, such as lobbying, which are considered perfectly legal and accepted in one country, yet illegal and unacceptable in another nation. This also complicates a consistent agreement regarding corruption across contexts. In this sense, there are many nuances associated with the definition of

corruption that affect how corrupt behavior is perceived across time, and space and that shape the manner in which corrupt individuals can be held accountable. Though framing corruption in a specific, simple context through a narrow definition risks minimizing the nuanced nature of the issue itself, for the purposes of academic research as well as to effectively prosecute corruption, a standard definition of corruption must be formulated and employed.

In addition to leaving out certain elements, defining corruption as ‘the abuse of public office for private gain’ is necessarily vague and does not distinguish between different types of corruption, nor the motives behind corrupt acts. A universally accepted typology of corruption does not exist, and scholars vary on how to separate the numerous forms of corrupt practices. Yet the reality that varying types, levels, and motives for corrupt practices exist, requires that the complex dynamics be examined and separated into distinct categories. Often times these acts overlap or are a combination of different components. Yet it is necessary to distinguish different forms of corruption in order to better understand not only the causes, consequences, and how to fight it, but also in order to identify how public opinion varies regarding perceptions of corruption scandals and corrupt politicians. Generally speaking, scholars tend to typologize corruption based on one or more of the following five axes (1) magnitude, (2) the nature of the transaction, (3) the broader context, (4) the outcome, and (5) the motive or purpose.

The first category relates to the magnitude of a corrupt practice. In this sense, corruption can either be “grand/high-level corruption” or “petty/low-level corruption”, which differentiates the size, the institutional location of the key actors, and the relative

frequency of the acts (Heywood, 1997; Morris, 2011; Vargas, 2009). Grand corruption involves large sums of money, high-level government officials, and occurs less frequently, whereas petty corruption encompasses smaller amounts of money, low-level civil servants or bureaucratic workers, and occurs relatively regularly. Another basic characteristic involves the different roles and norms that the key figures must abide by and relates to political corruption and bureaucratic/administrative corruption (Morris, 2011; Vargas, 2009; Zyglidopoulos, 2016). “Political corruption” occurs at the policymaking stage and violates second-order norms, which means that behavior deviates from the unwritten guidelines that establish how politicians should make decisions. “Bureaucratic/administrative corruption” ensues in relation to the implementation of policy and violates first-order norms, which are the written rules and regulations.

A second method of differentiating types of corruption considers the nature of the transaction, generating the following categories: transactive, exhortive, defensive, investive, nepotistic, autogenic, and supportive (Alatas, 1990 cited in Heywood 1997 and Morris 2011). “Transactive corruption” occurs when both the contributor and the recipient agree to the act and the outcome will be of mutual advantage to both parties. On the other hand, “exhortive corruption” transpires when one of the parties is coerced into the scheme, usually to avoid harm. “Defensive corruption” refers to the corrupt act that the victim of extortion is forced to perform. “Investive corruption” involves an act with no immediate recompense, but with the understanding that this will be beneficial for the acquisition of a future favor. “Nepotistic corruption” encompasses favoring or appointing friends or relatives to a position of power because of kinship connections,

not because they are qualified for the position. “Autogenic corruption” entails an individual benefiting, for example from preexisting knowledge of a policy outcome. Lastly, “supportive corruption” comprises actions to protect and strengthen existing corruption patterns.

The third category relates to the broader pattern of corruption within the system and takes the context into consideration. Corruption can be “incidental,” which occurs rarely, “institutional,” meaning that corruption transpires within an institution usually due to a lack of controls, or “systemic,” in that corrupt practices are inherent within the system or deeply entrenched in society (Robinson, 1988 as cited in Morris, 2011, p. 11). This category can also distinguish between “centralized” and “decentralized” corruption depending upon the control that the political elite maintains over local officials and the probability that bribes will result in the desired outcome (Shleifer & Vishny 1993; Bardhan, 2006 as cited in Morris, 2011, p. 11). Institutional, systemic, and centralized types all share intricate layers and channels of payoffs within the government system that usually benefit political parties or powerful leaders (Morris, 2011).

The fourth category relates to the outcome of a corrupt practice (Beare, 1997; Heidenheimer 1989; Lessig, 2013). This type of corruption is epitomized in Lessig’s (2013) definition of “institutional corruption”: a systemic and strategic influence which is legal or ethical that undermines an institution’s effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including weakening either the public’s trust in that institution or the institution’s inherent trustworthiness (p. 553). This perspective of institutional corruption focuses upon the outcome, which is that an institution is diverted or weakened from accomplishing its purpose. Another manner in

which to distinguish types of corruption based upon outcome comes from Heidenheimer's (1989) three categories of "public-office-centered", "market-centered", and "public-interest-centered" corruption (as cited in Johnston, 2001; Nye, 1967; van Klaveren, 1957; Friedrich, 1966). "Public-office-centered corruption" refers to behavior that deviates from the duties of a public official for private gain. "Market-centered corruption" relates to the intrusion of market incentives into decision-making where an official sees their position as a business and seeks to maximize their profits. "Public-interest-centered corruption" occurs when an official is induced to take actions that favor the provider of a reward and that damage the public interest. Yet another view that focuses upon the outcomes of corruption encompasses four possible dimensions (Beare, 1997): "bribes/kickbacks," in which money is demanded or expected in order to do legitimate business (such as to compete or win contracts); "election/campaign corruption," where illicit payments are made during an election to ensure continued influence; "protected corruption," when officials accept payments from criminal groups in exchange for approval to engage in illegitimate business (i.e. drug trafficking); and "systemic top-down corruption," when powerful elites systematically divert a country's wealth.

The final manner in which to distinguish forms of corruption, and the one which is of particular interest in the context of this study, is based upon purpose or motive, (Heywood, 1997; Morris, 2011; Weyland, 1998). Heywood (1997) distinguishes between "personal" and "institutional" corruption, in which personal corruption is aimed towards personal enrichment, and institutional corruption seeks to benefit an institution such as a political party. Within a similar framework, Weyland (1998)

proposes a similar distinction be based on purpose, in which corruption can either be utilized for political or personal purposes. In terms of political reasons, politicians or public officials can sell decisions in order to gain funds for future election campaigns. The other type is personally motivated, such as exploiting bribery for the accumulation of private wealth.

According to the vast majority of the literature, the *Mensalão* and *Petrobras* scandals would fall into the same category, as both are examples of grand, high level, systemic, political corruption. Yet the latter classification above offers more nuanced distinctions that are relevant for the cases at hand, as the corruption involved in the *Mensalão* was meant to grease the political wheels and get legislation passed, whereas the corruption involved in the *Petrobras* scandal was primarily for personal enrichment, albeit of a very large number of people (because a lot of the money was used for *Caixa 2*, as is becoming more and more apparent). One could argue that it was also meant for the maintenance of the structure of power, i.e. making sure the same elected officials or corrupt politicians get (re)elected). I hypothesize that these scandals can therefore be viewed as distinct based on their diverging underlying intents, and that these diverging intents are likely to affect levels of public reaction. The public might be more tolerant of corruption that is based upon forming a coalition to pass legislation in Congress than they would towards corruption based upon the profitability of construction companies for personal gain of executives and politicians. Thus, my thesis seeks to investigate whether the variation in the intent of the different types of corruption involved in the scandals is significantly portrayed within the media content analysis.



## **Economic Climate as Shaping Public Opinion**

The state of the economy comprises a key factor that commonly influences public opinion. If the economy is doing well, individuals are more likely to view issues or situations positively, but if the economy is doing poorly, public attitudes and beliefs can easily become negative. The influence of the economic environment on public views is well-documented in relation to topics as varied as voting patterns (Klašnja & Tucker, 2013), executive approval (Carlin, Love, & Martinez-Gallardo, 2015), second-level agenda setting (Hester & Gibson, 2003), support for markets and democracy (Graham & Sukhtankar, 2004), immigration reform (Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997), prejudicial stereotypes and immigration policy (Burns & Gimpel, 2000), and concern with climate change (Scruggs & Benegal, 2012).

Regarding voting patterns, Klašnja and Tucker (2013) investigate how corruption affects voting behavior when economic conditions are poor. Their results indicate that in a nation with low levels of corruption (e.g., Sweden), voters react negatively to corruption regardless of the economic state, whereas in a country with high levels of corruption (e.g., Moldova), voters react negatively to corruption only when the economy is doing poorly, but the issue becomes less important when the economy is doing well. These findings have important implications for understanding the relationship between the state of the economy and public opinion relating to the corruption cases in Brazil. Like Moldova, Brazil is ranked as a country where corruption is high and viewed as a systemic problem. If the results of the Klašnja and Tucker study are applied to Brazil, one concludes that voters will react negatively

towards corruption when the state of the economy is poor, but not necessarily when the economy is doing well.

A similar pattern emerges when the effect of the economy on public opinion is studied in relation to presidential accountability. Carlin, Love, and Martinez-Gallardo (2015) seek to explain the variations in accountability relating to the diverging outcomes of scandals on presidential popularity across Latin America. Their study posits that presidential accountability is linked to the ability of a president to manage the economy well, focusing upon inflation and unemployment as principal indicators of the state of the economy. The study proposes the theory of conditional accountability, in which the public punishes presidents for corruption scandals when the economy is weak, whereas under strong economic conditions the scandals do not tarnish presidential standing in the public view. By examining a presidential approval dataset for 18 Latin American countries, the study found evidence that scandals only appear to damage presidential approval when unemployment and inflation are high. These results thus support the thesis that accountability for scandals is less likely when the economy performs well, but more likely when the economy is doing poorly. If these findings hold true, it can be supposed that when unemployment and inflation are high (as was the case in Brazil during the *Petrolão* scandal) citizens will be more inclined to hold executives accountable. This in fact did occur, as Dilma's impeachment exemplifies. She was not impeached due to the *Petrolão* directly (in fact it was due to mismanagement of the economy, making up economic numbers to receive better electoral results) but the scandal certainly contributed to discrediting her competence in the public view.

Yet another context in which a similar relationship plays out relates to public support for markets and democracy in Latin America. Graham and Sukhtankar (2004) investigate the effects of economic crisis upon individual well-being and on public support for market policies and democracy. The study indicated that economic crises have negative effects on happiness levels in Latin America, which in turn influences attitudes regarding economic and political behavior. Corruption was a strong factor in respondent's criticism of democracy and the market, where wealthier, more informed people were more likely to view corruption as a serious issue (Graham & Sukhtankar, 2004). These findings are important because an individual's perceived wellbeing can shape public attitudes and decisions regarding political behaviors. So if the economy does poorly and an individual's wellbeing declines, this in turn affects public perceptions of politicians and political parties.

The effect of the economy on public opinion is also significant in relation to issues of climate change (Scruggs & Benegal, 2012). Their study, based upon public opinion data, suggests that the public decline in belief about climate change is driven by economic insecurity caused by the Great Recession (Scruggs & Benegal, 2012). The data suggests that poor economic conditions due to the recent economic downturn dramatically affected the declining concern about climate change. The public's apparent ambivalence about climate change poses serious issues, as public opinion can be an important factor in shaping policy change and political platforms. Economic conditions are continuously shifting, labor market conditions fluctuate, and the global economic system is volatile, bringing considerable uncertainty about public perceptions and attitudes towards this serious global issue.

The economy also has an indirect effect on public opinion depending on how it is portrayed through the media. Hester and Gibson (2003) examine how the tone of media coverage of the economy influences general public attitudes towards current and future economic performance. The results indicate that news coverage influences public confidence in the economy. Neither negative nor positive news was found to be a significant predictor of the public evaluation of *current* economic conditions, yet negatively framed news was found to impact attitudes regarding *future* economic conditions.

This distinction is interesting to note because individuals maintain direct contact with the current economic situation in daily interactions, yet do not have direct exposure to future economic conditions. It is assumed that people make judgments based upon personal experience first, but rely on media to gain information about issues that are out of reach, and so turn to the news for predictions and opinions about the future state of the economy. Similarly, most Brazilians are not in direct contact with grand, high-level political corruption in Brazil, and thus will seek out the news for information about how the situation is progressing. Thus, when exploring the determinants of public reaction to corruption scandals, one cannot ignore the crucial role of the media – it is to this that we now turn.

### **Media's Agenda Setting and Framing Corruption Scandals**

The media plays an important role in preventing, uncovering, and combating corruption. Stapenhurst (2000) proposes that journalism serves as an impediment to corruption in tangible ways that include, for example: investigating and exposing corrupt officials, prompting investigations and judicial proceedings by official bodies,

the impeachment or forced resignation of a corrupt politician or official, and fostering pressure for changes to laws and regulations that create a climate favorable to corruption (p. 3). Media reporting also disseminates intangible effects that are harder to measure and comprise, for example, the checks on corruption that result from a broader social climate of political pluralism and an enhanced sense of accountability among politicians and institutions (Stapenhurst, 2000, p.3). In this sense, the media can act as an effective tool in curbing corruption.

In contrast, however, increased media coverage of corruption scandals also holds a unique paradox in that on the one hand, a “free and fair media” media is exposing corrupt practices and fulfilling their “watchdog” role, but on the other hand, this can actually increase the levels of perceived corruption within a nation. When the public reads more about corruption, anxiety and fear can increase, propagating the belief that corrupt practices are more prevalent in a given society than the reality reflects. This becomes apparent especially in comparison with other nations in which corruption occurs more frequently within government institutions, yet lower levels of perceived corruption prevail, as the media is not exposing the illicit behaviors to the same extent.

These notions can be applied to the Brazilian corruption cases in the sense that both the tangible and intangible effects are evident, as well as the paradox of investigative journalism; the media coverage of the scandals contributes to consolidate the perception of high levels of corruption in Brazil, but at the same time plays a crucial role in combating corruption by exposing the schemes and prompting investigations that help to hold politicians and business men accountable.

In addition to the functions described above, the main role of the media is to provide critical information and insights to inform the public regarding key issues. Mass media news is widely accessible in a variety of formats through newspapers, television, radio, internet, and on social media platforms. The manner in which a story is presented and the amount of media attention the story receives has the potential to substantially shape public attitudes. The main theories that explain how the media influences public opinion are agenda setting and second-level agenda setting, the latter similar to the concept of framing.

Agenda-setting theory proposes that extensive media coverage of an issue provides salience cues to the public regarding the relative importance of an issue (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2002). Many news stories are available daily, yet due to limited time and space, decisions regarding which stories should be given more attention to are constantly made. Media outlets have the power to decide which issues will receive greater attention (more airtime, more articles, etc.) and which issues will not. Some issues will inevitably be left out and the audience will not receive salience cues regarding their relative importance. Thus, the public learns about the relative importance of certain issues depending upon how much that issue is covered in the press, greater media coverage increasing the public's perceived importance of a given issue. McCombs and Shaw (1972) established this branch of research and numerous studies have been conducted that support the theory that the media's concern with a certain news topic determines the perceived salience of that issue in public opinion (Golan & Wanta, 2001; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004; Kioussis & Wu, 2008; McLeod & Hertog 1992; and Sadaf, 2011).

Second-level agenda-setting theory combines traditional agenda-setting with media frames, which are “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issues is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard et al., 1991 cited in Golan & Wanta, 2001, p. 248). Media outlets frame issues when they “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993 as cited in Golan & Wanta, 2001, p. 248). The manner in which public affairs are “framed” by the mass media affects how the public perceives those issues. Thus framing contributes to second-level agenda setting in which issues are not only rendered salient, but also given a particular meaning and assigned a particular interpretation (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004 p. 367). First level agenda setting influences what one thinks about, whereas second level agenda setting influences how one thinks about it.

Researchers have demonstrated the importance of first and second level agenda setting across a number of empirical settings including social protest groups (McLeod & Hertog 1992), political election campaigns (Golan & Wanta, 2001; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004), foreign nations (Kioussis & Wu, 2008), and specific issues, such as judicial restoration in Pakistan (Sadaf, 2011). These studies utilize different approaches. In relation to protest groups, McLeod & Hertog (1992) established that media coverage can influence public perceptions of social protest groups through micro-descriptive and macro-conceptual level analysis of the depictions of public opinion. They have focused on public opinion of particular individuals such as presidential candidates (Golan &

Wanta, 2001) and of groups such as social movements (Sadaf 2011; McLeod & Hertog 1992). Sadaf (2011), for instance, found that public perception was highly affected by the favorable prominence newspapers gave to the issue of judicial restoration through survey data.

Expanding upon these approaches, my research will focus upon examining the manner in which the media depicts the political corruption scandals in Brazil. I will conduct a coded analysis of news stories from mainstream Brazilian media outlets, and identify how those depictions influence public opinion. As noted above, research indicates that the public will often turn to media to understand especially complex matters with which they have limited day-to-day interactions. Although many Brazilians have first-hand experience with low-level corruption, they generally have little contact with the type of grand corruption represented in the *Mensalão* and *Petrobras* scandals, the majority of material informing the public on the situation – who is involved, how, and why - coming from the news. News plays an informative role by providing details of the scandals, tracking the progression of the trial process, and which politicians, companies, or political parties are involved. But the above literature also suggests that the media may play an additional analytical role in which they frame the corruption and relevant players in ways that have an effect on public opinion. Critically, the media may influence who is considered “guilty” or “innocent,” and who is to be held to account for corruption. Thus, it is important to consider which aspects the media focuses upon, what elements are left out, the angle in which the story is covered and the biases that are portrayed.



The existing literature suggests that the media will be likely to play an important first level and second level agenda setting role across both scandals under analysis. Indeed, the literature suggests that the media is consistently undertaking both roles. Because of this basic assumption, however, potential variation in the levels/extent and the kinds of agenda setting that news outlets undertake is ignored and therefore unexplored. The literature focuses more upon how agenda setting and framing theory function, but does not elaborate when or under what conditions these processes are most likely to occur and to have a significant impact on public opinion in the face of other competing factors that are also likely to have an effect.

### **Case Studies**

The corruption case studies that I have selected offer the opportunity to explore the variation in different types of corruption, economic climate, and first and second level agenda setting and thus to fill the gaps in the existing literature and research. My comparison will focus on two of Brazil's most recent political corruption scandals. The first, *Mensalão* or "big monthly allowance" was a vote buying scheme in which members of Congress were paid monthly bribes in order to form a coalition with the governing party, the *Partido dos Trabalhadores – Worker's Party (PT)*. This came to light in 2005, during president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's (Lula) first term, when it was discovered that the PT had been paying several congressmen 30,000 *reais* a month (the equivalent of \$12,000), to form congressional allies and support PT's legislative agenda. The situation became public in a newspaper interview with the president of an allied party, and shortly thereafter security camera tapes were leaked depicting politicians stuffing large stacks of cash into their suit pockets. The situation resulted in a

federal investigation where several powerful politicians were convicted. Although Lula was also investigated, no evidence that he was directly involved was uncovered and he was ultimately not implicated in the scheme. The subsequent public reaction encompassed utter disillusionment that a corruption scandal of this magnitude had occurred in Brazil. The discontent, however, was mainly directed towards frustration with the scandal itself, and did not concentrate the blame solely on Lula.

The second case, the *Petrolão*, was discovered in 2014 during Dilma Rousseff's presidency and is the largest corruption scandal in Brazilian history, involving high profile politicians and business elites. At the center of the scandal lies *Petrobras*, Brazil's national oil company that provides much of the nation's economic growth. The scandal consists of the irregular bidding process for government contracts, where heads of large construction companies formed an illegal alliance to gain overvalued *Petrobras* contracts via kickbacks, laundered through offshore accounts and worth millions of *reais*. This case occasioned a still ongoing mass federal investigation termed *lava jato* or "operation car wash," that has convicted several of Brazil's top businessmen and politicians. Much suspicion arose surrounding Dilma's role in the events mainly because she was president of the *Petrobras* board during this time, yet evidence so far does not prove that she was directly involved.

Both cases differ in relation to the type of corruption, economic context the country faced, how the press covered them, and the different reactions elicited in terms of presidential approval. During the *Mensalão* scandal (which involved bribery to form a political coalition), Brazil was experiencing rapid economic growth due to high commodity prices and increasing demand from China for Brazilian exports. Though the

scandal elicited mass media coverage, social mobilization was minimal. Public dissatisfaction was targeted mainly towards the inherent weaknesses in Brazil's multi-party system, but did not extend completely towards Lula. He was not implicated in the scheme and his public image remained relatively unscathed. He was re-elected for a second term the following year, and left office with an 80% approval rating. Speculations exist surrounding the possibility that he will run for President in 2018 (although this prospect is becoming less likely).

In contrast, during the *Petrolão* scandal (which involved kickbacks and money laundering from illicit government contracts), Brazil began experiencing a severe economic crisis characterized by high inflation, high unemployment, and a deep recession. The scandal drew immense public outrage, which manifested in large-scale protests. Dilma was at the center of the scandal, due to her association with *Petrobras*. Although she has also not been implicated in the ongoing investigation, her popularity has been dramatically affected, decreasing to just 8%. In conjunction with other factors, the scandal also contributed to her recent removal from office through impeachment on 31 August 2016.

In order to further understand the nature of the corruption scandals, I will present the main impacts that the scandals propagated. One of the main pieces of legislation passed during the period of the *Mensalão* was Lei 10.836, approved on January 9<sup>th</sup> 2004, which established the *Bolsa Familia* program (Civil, 2004). Considered one of the greatest feats of Lula's government, the conditional cash transfer program aimed to end the cycle of poverty. *Bolsa Familia* provides families of low socioeconomic background a stipend for their children to attend school and receive

regular health checkups. The program was widely successful and more than halved extreme poverty from 9.7% to 4.3% of the population (Wetzel, 2013). A similar model has also been adopted in other nations.

Since Brazil is a nation that struggles with extremely high levels of poverty and inequality, the assumption is that the intentions of the legislation to push forward a social agenda for the benefit of the population may contribute to shaping how the public accepts the scandal. This is directly reflected in Lula's support base, as the majority is made up of low income Brazilians who benefit from the *Bolsa Familia* program. The program benefited approximately 45 million Brazilians, or 25% of the population and so was instrumental in shaping Lula's voter support group (Levitsky, 2011).

On the other hand, the *Petrolão* scandal had a directly negative impact upon social wellbeing. The *Petrolão* corruption scandal involved much larger sums of money: the bribes paid in the *Mensalão* scandal amount to about R\$ 100 million (USD \$43 million) (Antunes, 2013), whereas so far investigators have uncovered around R\$ 6.2 billion (USD \$3 billion) in bribes paid during the *Petrolão* (Leahy, 2016). As new information continually surfaces the latter number continues to increase.

The scandal had tremendous negative implications for *Petrobras* as a company, as it was downgraded by all three major rating agencies thus deterring its investment capabilities. In addition to *Petrobras*, all the major construction companies in Brazil are implicated in the scheme including *Odebrecht*, *OAS*, *Camargo Corrêa* and *Andrade Gutierrez*. Also, the international implications that the *Petrolão* encompasses are much more explicit. For example, *Odebrecht*, one of the main construction companies involved in the schemes has operations not only in Brazil, but also across Latin America

and in some African nations. The investigations revealed financial networks involving shell companies and various banks to transition more than \$788 million dollars in bribes to corrupt leaders, political parties, and government officials in Angola, Mozambique, Argentina, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela (TI, 2016, p. 2). This means that the scandal transcends national boundaries, in contrast to the *Mensalão* that was confined mostly within the Brazilian Congress. The scandal also negatively impacted society as thousands of workers were laid off. A worker at the refinery construction site at Itaboraí laments: “Those responsible have forgotten that there is a whole nation dependent on this industry. They should pay, but we are the ones who are suffering. We are the ones losing our jobs. We are the ones struggling to pay for bread and milk for our children” (Watts, 2015). These implications may point to higher levels of acceptance for the first scandal, and stronger levels of resentment and rejection for the second scandal.

### Chapter 3: Methods

My investigation consists of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. I first conducted an extensive literature review on previous academic studies regarding corruption in Brazil, focusing on public perceptions and media influence. I utilized databases such as Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, and Google Scholar for key terms such as “typologies of corruption,” “economy and public opinion,” “agenda-setting theory,” and “corruption scandals in Brazil.” I also searched through the papers that were cited in the studies relevant to my study, expanding the scope of research.

I then carried out quantitative assessments of public opinion trends overtime through public opinion survey data collected from a variety of sources including: the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), *Latinobarómetro - Opinión Pública Latinoamericana*, Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), World Bank Country Surveys and Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE), and *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística* (IBOPE), and *Datafolha*. These sources consist of a combination of U.S., international, and Brazilian databases in order to overcome biases associated with any particular source. The CPI consists of the opinions of those connected to business in Brazil, whereas LAPOP and *Latinobarómetro* focuses upon the perspectives of ordinary Brazilian citizens, thus my data will encompass perspectives from various demographics.

I also conducted a content analysis of news media in process tracing of historical events. Content analysis involves coding, a process that categorizes passages of text based on common themes drawn from multiple texts. These commonalities are then

“coded” or labeled and can be compared and analyzed later on. Codes can be based on keywords, terms, phrases, ideas, concepts, or topics found within the data, and can facilitate drawing patterns from multiple texts. In this manner, qualitative data from the news articles can be converted into quantitative data for the purposes of data analysis.

I analyzed and coded 132 articles from *Folha de São Paulo*, one of Brazil’s top media outlets, regarding coverage of the *Mensalão* and *Petrolão* corruption scandals. *Folha de São Paulo* is considered a center-left news source, founded in 1921, with average circulation numbers around 320,740 copies. The articles were compiled through Factiva, a global news database owned by Dow Jones and Company. Since the Factiva database does not categorize articles based upon type, my sample consists of a variety of different formats including political news articles, opinion editorials, and letters to the editor.

In terms of total coverage of the *Mensalão* scandal, the number of published articles containing with the keywords “*mensalão*” and “*corrupção*” (corruption in Portuguese) was 3,184, ranging from 2005 to 2017 (see Fig. 1). I focused upon the two peak years of coverage: 2005, the year in which the scandal was revealed to the press, and 2012, the year in which the trial for those implicated in the scheme began. During those two years there were 1,341 total articles published with my keywords, 775 from 2005 and 566 from 2012. I used a random sampling technique to select the specific articles for my analysis. I read 5% of the articles (67 in total). In my sample there were 39 articles from 2005, and 28 from 2012. In order to ensure randomness and unbiased selection I consistently chose every 20<sup>th</sup> text beginning from the fourth article (the number 4 was based upon a random dice roll).

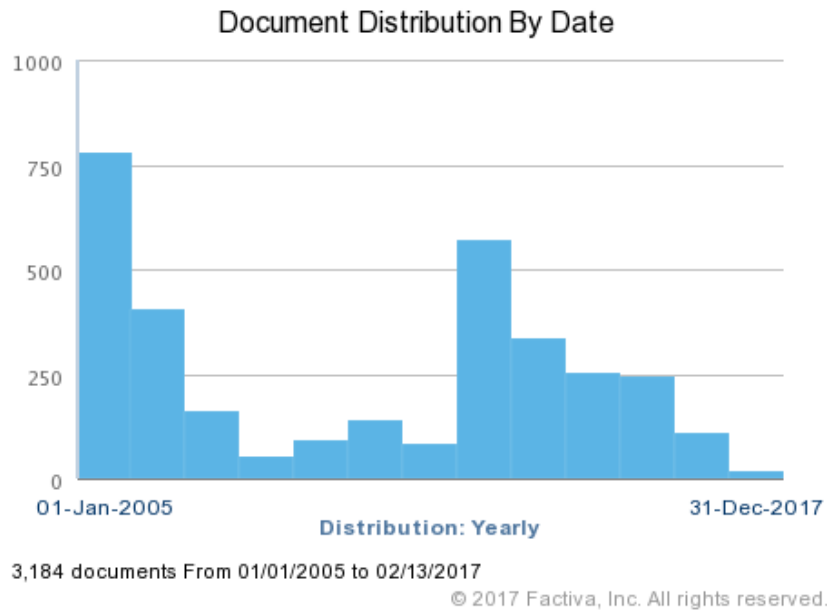


Figure 1: *Mensalão* Coverage Distribution in the Media by Year (2005 – 2017). Graph taken from: (Factiva Database, 2017).

This graph represents the yearly news media distribution of articles with the key words “*mensalão*” and “*corrupção*” from January 1, 2005 till February 13, 2017. Peak years of coverage were 2005 and 2012, the years utilized in my analysis.

For the second case, the total coverage of the *Petrolão* corruption scandal containing the keywords “*corrupção*” and “*lava jato*” was 2,425 articles ranging from 2014 to 2017.

The two years of peak coverage were 2015 and 2016. During those two years there were 2,137 total articles published with my keywords, 1,117 from 2015 and 1,020 from 2016 (Fig. 2). Since the total number of articles published related to the *Lava Jato* was considerably higher, and in order to keep the sample sizes similar, I selected 3% of the articles (65 in total). In my sample there were 35 articles from 2015 and 32 from 2016. Again, I randomly selected the articles, choosing every 33rd article beginning from the 9th text (the number 9 was based upon another random dice roll).



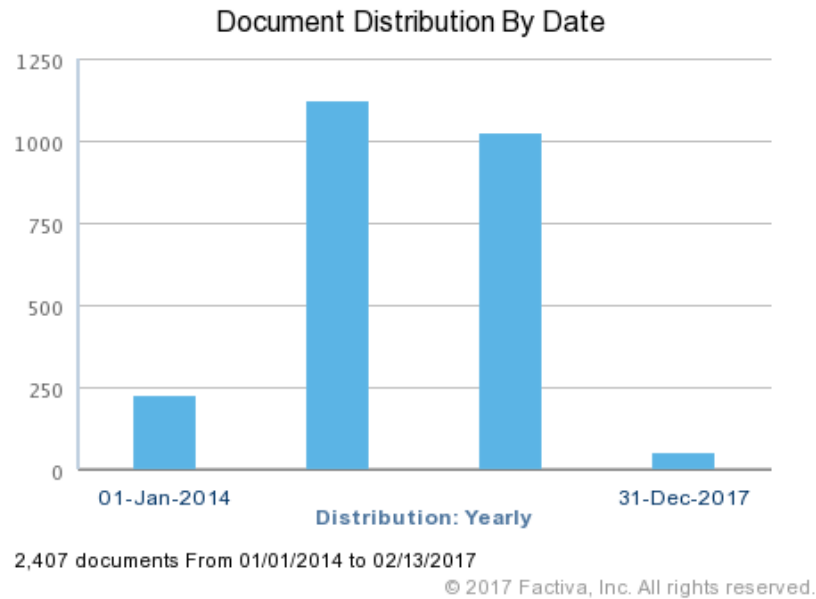


Figure 2: *Petrolão* Coverage Distribution in the Media by Year (2014 – 2017). Graph taken from: (Factiva Database, 2017).

This graph represents the yearly news media distribution of articles with the key words “lava jato” and “corrupção” from January 1, 2014 till February 13, 2017. Peak years of coverage were 2015 and 2016, and comprise the focus of my analysis.

I focused upon four main categories for my content analysis: 1) the depiction of Lula and Dilma as either positive, negative, or neutral; 2) the depiction of the corruption scandal as an isolated incident or within a systemic environment; 3) the evaluation of the investigation procedure and the trial; and 4) an overall assessment of the economic, political, institutional and social impact of the scandals.

The manner in which I classified the tone of the media coverage is based off of the categories described by Valencia (2010), and defined as follows; I classified positive tone as whether the politician, institution, or organization was described favorably through the use of positive terms/statements/traits or if the actions of the subject were related to success. Following the same pattern, I classified negative tone as whether the politician, institution, or organization was described unfavorably through

the use of negative terms/statements/traits or when the actions of the subject were criticized or related to failure. Neutral coverage was classified if there was evidence of an equal mix between favorable and unfavorable coverage within the article, or if there was no apparently strong inclination either way.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Type of Corruption Findings

Corruption is considered a major issue within the Brazilian public's perception. Public opinion survey data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), and *Latinobarómetro - Opinión Pública Latinoamericana* indicate that respondents from Brazil consistently rank corruption as one of the greatest problems the country faces. In 2015 *Latinobarómetro* respondents indicated that corruption was the top problem the nation faced, as 22.5% of respondents ranked corruption as the greatest problem in Brazil, followed by public health (16.8%) and public safety/violence (8.7%) (Fig. 3). Similarly, LAPOP survey data reveals that in 2014, 12.41% of respondents ranked corruption as the most serious issue that Brazil faces. In this survey corruption comes in third place overall, surpassed by public health/a lack of healthcare services (25.63%) and violence (19.59%). In addition, Brazilian public opinion data from *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística* (IBOPE) reveals that in 2016, corruption was the second most important issue for 32% of respondents (Fig. 4). These measures of public opinion establish that the Brazilian public perceives corruption in general as a major issue that must be dealt with, though these surveys do not distinguish between different types of corruption.

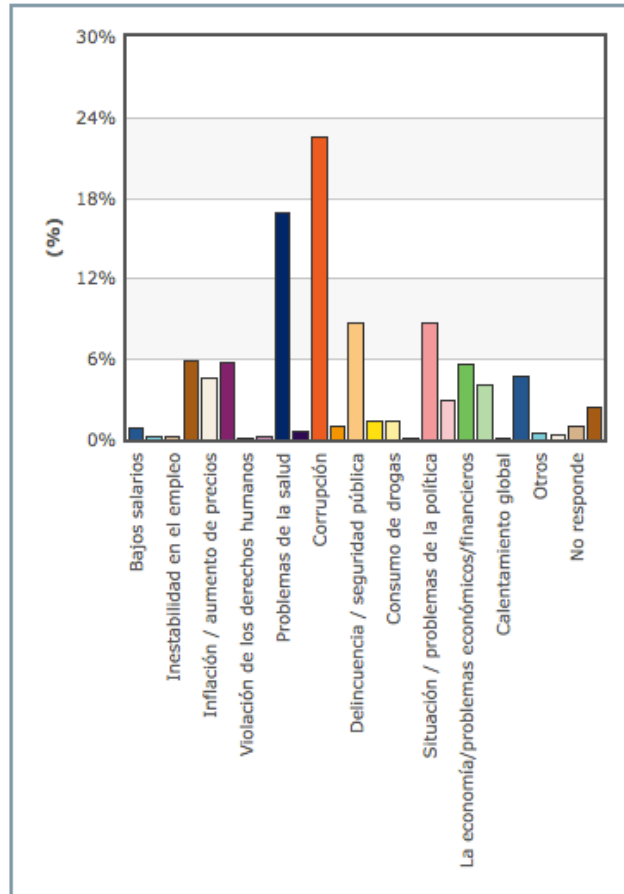


Figure 3: *Latinobarómetro* Public Opinion Data 2015. Graph taken from: (Latinobarómetro Database, 2015).

Public opinion survey responses to the question: "En su opinión, ¿Cuál considera Ud. que es el problema más importante en el país?" <In your opinion, what do you consider to be the most important problem in the country? From left to right the column categories can be translated as follows: low wages, instability in employment, inflation, violation of human rights, health problems, corruption, public security, consumption of drugs, political situation, the economy/economic/financial problems, global warming, other, no response.> Note that corruption was the top issue (22.5%).

### *Principais problemas do Brasil em 2016*

*Percentual de citações como um dos dois principais problemas (%)*



Figure 4: IBOPE Public Opinion Data 2016. Graph taken from: (IBOPE Inteligência Database, 2017).

Public opinion survey responses to the question: In your opinion, what do you consider to be the most important problem in the country? From top to bottom the row categories can be translated as follows: unemployment, corruption, health, public security/violence, low wages, drugs, quality of education, high interest rates, drought/lack of water, poverty/hunger. Note that corruption was the second top issue (32%).

After an extensive investigation into videos and images of demonstrations, slogans, and signs, it is evident that the protestors who wish to see Dilma impeached and Lula sent to prison do not distinguish between different “types” of corruption within the framework of the two corruption scandals. Instead, protestors reveal frustration and anger with the repeated patterns of corruption that permeate the Brazilian government encompassing the most powerful political and business elites. Protestors demand an end to high-level corruption in general. They implore that the government invest in education and healthcare instead. Most protestors group Lula, Dilma, and the PT into a single category, for example, at an anticorruption rally a sign reads “We want the whole workers party in Jail!!!” (Ruptly, 2016). Similarly, another protestor proclaims:

“Estamos lutando pros nossos direitos contra o *Mensalão*, contra o *Petrolão*, contra o Lula ladrão, contra a Dilma, contra o Cunha, contra o Maranhão, salve o Brasil, revolução paulista.” <We are fighting for our rights against the *Mensalão* against the *Petrolão* against Lula the thief, against Dilma, against Cunha and against Maranhão> (Ruptly, 2016). Other protestors call for Dilma’s impeachment chanting “Fora Dilma!” <Out Dilma!> (Financial Times, 2016). Some demonstrators even demand military intervention. Lastly, the protestors clearly support the investigation as an image depicts “In Moro We Trust” and another states: “I am against corruption in the country and in favor of Judge Sergio Moro and of justice” (Financial Times, 2016).

In contrast, those that support Lula and Dilma wear red clothing to manifest their solidarity with the PT political party. Demonstrators chant in support of Lula: “Ole ole ole ola Lula Lula” and “Lula guerreiro do povo brasileiro” <Lula, warrior of the Brazilian people> (AP, 2016). The impeachment is referred to as the manifestation of a coup and anti-impeachment demonstrators chant “Não vai ter golpe” <There won’t be a coup> (AP, 2016). A pro-Dilma demonstrator points out the absurdity of military intervention: “A gente passou 21 anos em ditadura e as pessoas que estão aí gritando querendo impeachment eu acho que não estudaram história, não tem noção do que estão querendo.” <We spent 21 years under a dictatorship, those that are crying for impeachment haven’t studied history, they have no idea what they are asking for> (AP, 2016).

Overall, the discourse of the protestors is highly divided between those that support Dilma and Lula and those that oppose them. Both sides wish to see an end to

political corruption in Brazil, though there is generally a lack of distinction between the different types of corruption that the scandals entail.

### **Economic Climate and Public Opinion Findings**

The economic situation in Brazil differed significantly during the two corruption scandals (Fig. 5). During the *Mensalão*, Brazil was undergoing a phase of rapid economic growth. In 2004 Brazil's GDP grew by 5.2% (Santos, 2005). Brazil's economic growth continued throughout the mid 2000's and the nation was able to endure the global financial crisis relatively unscathed. This economic success was heavily influenced by changes in Brazilian economic policy and fiscally prudent measures. As shown in figure 6, Brazil also benefited from strong demand from China for key commodity exports such as iron ore, soybeans, and sugar (ECB, 2016). In addition, the *real*, the Brazilian currency, grew to maintain a high value on the international market, and inflation levels were controlled (Pereira, 2005).

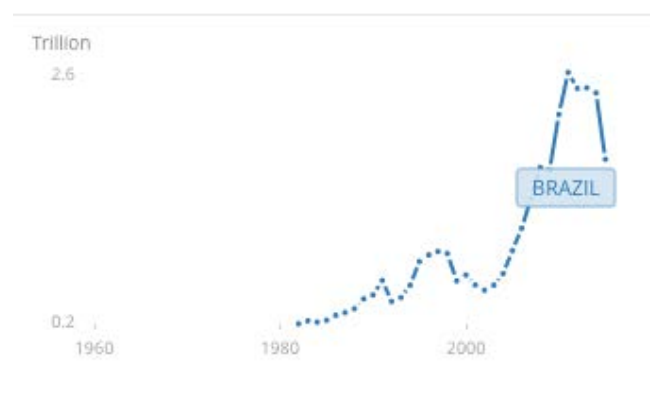


Figure 5: World Bank Data Brazilian GDP. Graph taken from: ("Brazil - World Bank Data," 2017).

Brazilian GDP growth trends from 1982 to 2015. Note the GDP growth beginning in 2002 through 2011, and decline around 2014.

## GDP growth and major export commodity prices

(left-hand scale: index 2000=100; right-hand scale: annual percentage changes)

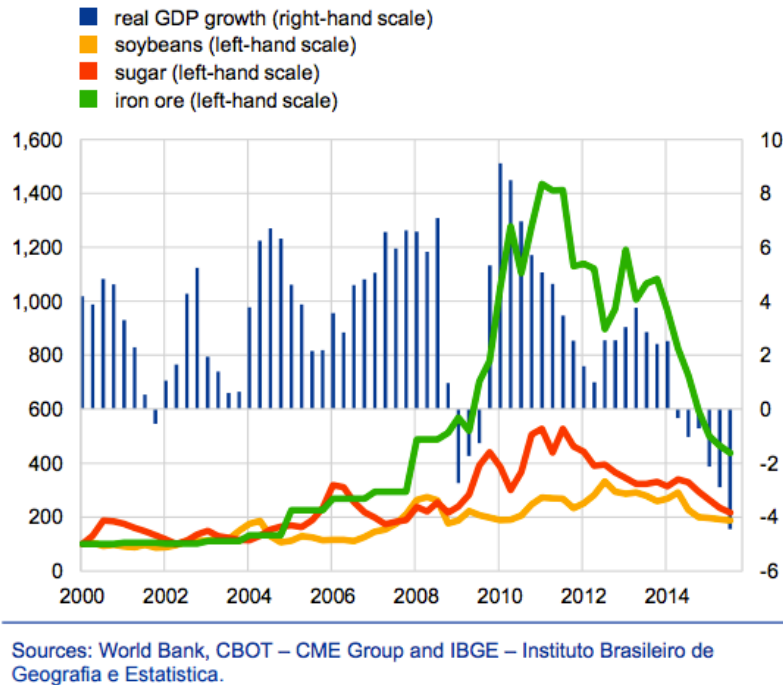


Figure 6: European Central Bank Data Brazilian Commodity Prices. Graph taken from: (European Central Bank (ECB) Economic Bulletin, 2016).

Brazilian GDP growth and major export commodity prices from 2000 through 2014. Note the prices (especially iron ore) steadily increase in the mid 2000's and drop sharply in 2014.

This economic success did not last, however, and around 2015 Brazil began to experience a severe economic crisis and a deep recession. According to the World Bank, the nation's growth rate decelerated from an annual growth rate of 4.5% between 2006 and 2010, to 2.1% between 2011 and 2014. In addition, the GDP contracted by 3.8% in 2015. The economy crisis encompassed a fall in commodity prices, and the inability to establish policy adjustments, which undermined trust with consumers and investors ("Brazil", 2017). In addition, in 2015 Brazil experienced 10% inflation. When commodity prices fell in 2011, the impact on revenue from exports was significant as iron ore accounts for 13% of total exports and raw sugar accounts for 5% (ECB, 2016).



As growth declined, other structural weaknesses were highlighted in the economy, including a burdensome tax system, a large informal sector, poor infrastructure, lack of competition, the high costs of launching a business, and high tariff rates (ECB, 2016.) In addition, total investment declined by 6% on average since 2014. *Petrobras* had to cut investments by 33% in 2014 and 2015 due to the corruption scandal and to adjust to lower oil prices. This is significant because *Petrobras* accounts for 10% of total Brazilian investments and almost 2% of the nation's GDP (ECB, 2016).

Brazilian public opinion data encompassing perceptions of the economy match the trends reflected in the economy and the subsequent public backlash against the corruption scandals. During the *Mensalão* scandal and trial, the *Datafolha* public opinion survey data supports my hypothesis that the public did not have a strong negative reaction to the corruption scandal in part because it did not view the economy as a major issue. In 2005 at the onset of the scandal, Brazilians maintained positive attitudes regarding the state of the economy. Most respondents (46%) considered that the economic situation would not change, and more respondents believed that the national economic scenario would improve (40%) than deteriorate (12%) (*Datafolha*, 2005). Similarly, the majority of Brazilians did not believe that the economy was a major issue that Brazil faced. In 2009, nearing the end of the Lula administration and before the *Mensalão* trial, a survey reveals that the least amount of citizens perceived the economy (2%) and inflation (1%) to be crucial problems (*Datafolha*, 2009). Brazilians also maintained that Lula managed the economy well. In 2010, when asked which areas the Lula government managed best, economic performance was the second most cited category (at 13%), followed by employment (at 10%), where the top area

was issues related to hunger and misery (19%) (*Datafolha*, 2010). In addition, economic performance was not cited among the worst areas of the Lula administration; instead health, public safety, education, and corruption (6%) were the worst performing areas (*Datafolha*, 2010).

This means that citizens were content with Lula's social spending initiatives such as *Bolsa Familia*, which contributed to the drastic decrease in extreme poverty rates in Brazil. The state of the economy was not perceived as a significant issue to the general public, as it was not on the list of top issues the country faced, and was instead the second area that the Lula government was perceived to have managed best. This may explain why backlash against the first corruption scandal was limited, as the public opinion data confirms that the general public perception was satisfaction with the state of the economy and with the Lula government's management of the economy.

For the second corruption case, the *Datafolha* public opinion survey data also supports my hypothesis that the public viewed the economy pessimistically during the *Petrolão* scandal and the *Lava Jato* investigation. At the onset of the *Petrolão* scandal in 2014, citizens were pessimistic about the country's economy. The majority of Brazilians believed that the economic situation would worsen (36%), and more believed that the economy would remain the same (32%) than improve (25%) (*Datafolha*, 2014). As the economic crisis worsened in 2015, Brazilians continued to view the economy in a negative manner. The majority remained pessimistic about the country's economic situation, as well as personal and macroeconomic aspects such as unemployment, purchasing power, and inflation (*Datafolha*, 2015). The number of Brazilians who believed that the economic situation would worsen increased to the majority of 60%,

whereas the percentage of respondents who believed the economy would improve or remain the same both dropped to 15% and 23% respectively (*Datafolha*, 2015).

Similarly, in 2016, pessimism with micro and macroeconomic issues also increased (*Datafolha*, 2016). In addition, a 2016 IBOPE public opinion survey data reveals that unemployment was viewed as the most important issue Brazil faced by 43% of respondents (IBOPE, 2017). In a 2015 IBOPE survey, the majority of respondents (62%) believed that Dilma's management of the government was bad or terrible (IBOPE, 2015). In addition, another 2015 IBOPE survey links the deteriorating state of the economy to corruption. The survey reveals that 87% of respondents believed that Brazil was facing an economic crisis. The main reasons cited were an increase in prices or inflation (56%), and the second main reason was corruption (34%), followed by increasing interest rates (28), unemployment (8%) and the raising value of the dollar (5%) (IBOPE, 2015).

This dissatisfaction with the state of the economy during the second corruption scandal means that Brazilians in general were dissatisfied with Dilma's management of the economy, and experienced anxiety regarding financial insecurity and fear that the economic climate would continue to worsen. The deteriorating state of the economy was thus perceived as an important issue in Brazilian public opinion. This increased anxiety and fear may contribute to explaining why backlash against the second corruption scandal occurred on an extremely large scale, as the public opinion data confirms that the general attitude was one of dissatisfaction with the state of the economy and with the Dilma government's management of economic affairs; the blame for the economic crisis was partially placed on corruption.

Examples of protest slogans that reference the economy include: “Queremos emprego e salario digno” <We want a job and a living wage> and “Não faltam médicos, faltam condições de trabalho digno” <There is not a lack of doctors, there is a lack of decent working conditions> (Faria, 2013). These slogans demonstrate Brazilian citizens’ discontent with the economic climate and the resulting job insecurity and poor working conditions that they experienced.

The section above centered upon the direct effects of the economy on public opinion; I will be discussing the economy’s indirect effects on public opinion through the media in the next section.

### **Media Content Analysis Findings**

The media content analysis focused upon four main areas: 1) the depiction the key political figures; 2) the depiction of the corruption scandals; 3) the evaluation of the investigation procedure and the trial; and 4) an overall assessment of the impacts of the scandals.

#### *Depiction of Key Political Figures*

For the first area of focus in the content analysis (see Figs. 7 & 8) I found that slightly more articles overall reference Lula surrounding the *Mensalão* scandal (48%), than mention Dilma regarding the *Petrolão* scandal (42%). In relation to their respective corruption cases, Lula is depicted positively slightly more often during the *Mensalão* (in 19% of articles) than is Dilma during the *Petrobras* scandal (in 15% of articles). However, negative coverage of Dilma was much more common in coverage of the *Petrobras* scandal (63% of articles) than negative coverage of Lula in coverage of the *Mensalão* scandal (31% of articles). Half of the articles from the *Mensalão* scandal that

mentioned Lula depicted him in a neutral light, whereas only 22% of *Petrobras* articles mentioning Dilma depicted her neutrally.

**Mensalão Coverage of Lula**

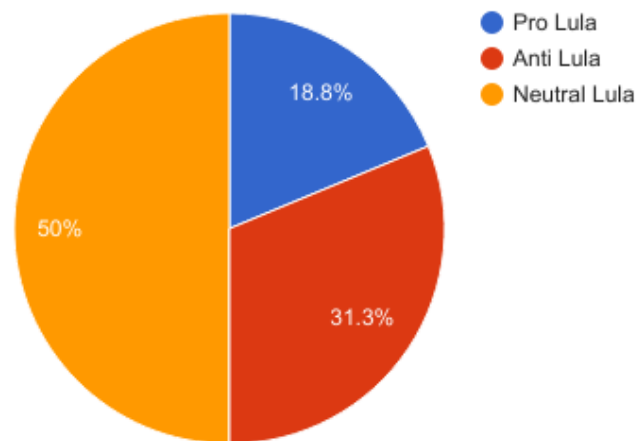


Figure 7: *Folha* Depiction of Lula and the *Mensalão*

**Petrolão Coverage of Dilma**

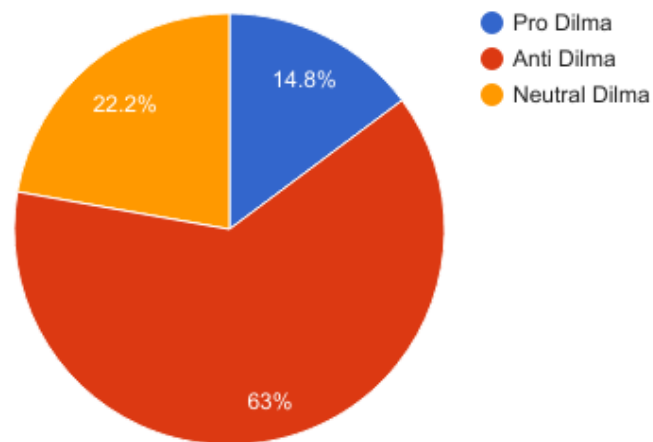


Figure 8: *Folha* Depiction of Dilma and the *Petrolão*

### *Positive Coverage of Key Political Figures*

Positive coverage of Lula and Dilma centers mainly on how corruption is addressed in their respective governments and on the demonstrations in their support.

The most prominent manner in which the corpus depicts Lula, is as a mediator between key groups addressing the issue of corruption within his government. For example, he has a direct relationship with the masses through institutional mediations via the National Congress (Vianna, 2005), he acts as bridge between other left wing Latin American governments and leaders (Seabra, 2005), and he also meets with prominent social movements such as the Landless Workers Movement (MST) and labor union leaders (Scolese & Duailibi, 2005). Similarly, positive coverage praises Dilma's measures to combat corruption. For example, Dilma presented an anticorruption proposal to Congress ("Presidente," 2015), and permitted the investigations to proceed freely without utilizing her power to interfere (Painel, 2015). In relation to popular support, positive coverage of Dilma reports on rallies where demonstrators protest against her impeachment (Costa, 2016; Haubert, 2016). Similarly, positive coverage of Lula reports on manifestations that are composed of leftist intellectuals who express their support for Lula, though they are dissatisfied with his government (Marreiro, 2005). In both cases, the number of articles depicting popular support among the public is limited.

#### *Negative coverage of Key Political Figures*

In both cases, negative coverage of leaders entailed reporting on anti corruption protests and the respective president's diminishing popularity, though these aspects are much more developed in the *Petrolão* articles. To present Lula's decreasing popularity, *Folha* cites public opinion polls showing distrust in government institutions (Moisés, 2005), and depicts Lula losing public support: "O presidente deve ter percebido que quem torce pelo Brasil não torce mais por este governo." <The president must have

realized that those who root for Brazil no longer root for this government> (“Painel,” 2005). Similarly, *Folha* conveys the precarious nature of Dilma's government, reporting that her support base is disintegrating and that the government is unstable and unpopular: “Desde os protestos de março, o governo nunca pareceu tão frágil, e o desfecho da crise, tão incerto.” <Since the March protests, the government has never seemed so fragile, and the outcome of the crisis, so uncertain> (Franco, 2015).

In relation to demonstrations, negative coverage of Lula describes small scale protests in Rio and Porto Alegre against corruption in Lula's government. One of the signs reads: "Lula, de orgulho a vergonha nacional" <Lula, from pride to national shame> (“Atos,” 2005). In contrast, coverage of anti Dilma demonstrations is much more developed, as there are several articles that report on protests across Brazil and even abroad. This includes massive anti corruption protests that occurred across 26 states in Brazil (Gullar, 2015), including Brasilia, the capital, supporting the impeachment process against Dilma, with participation of movements such as Vem Pra Rua, Nas Ruas and Limpa Brasil (Costa, 2016). As another example, Brazilians united in front of the Brazilian consulate in Washington DC to protest against Dilma's government, Lula and the PT (Ninio, 2016).

In addition, negative coverage encompasses criticisms of Lula, Dilma, and the PT. *Folha* criticizes Lula for defending corrupt politicians (“Lula,” 2005), and accuses the PT of attempting to distract attention away from the *Mensalão* by drawing attention to another corruption scandal called *Caso Cachoeira* (Ombudsman & Singer, 2012). In contrast, negative coverage of Dilma centers on criticizing her for incompetence. For

example, a letter to the editor complaints that Dilma is incapable and had ruined the economy, and stated that the political crisis was only “temporary” (“Painel,” 2015).

### *Neutral Coverage of Key Political Figures*

The main feature encompassing Lula’s neutral coverage surrounds the question of whether or not he knew about the “monthly allowance” corruption scheme within his ruling coalition. Either he had been aware of the plan and was now lying about not having prior knowledge of the situation, or he had truly been oblivious to the vast corruption scheme in which his political party played a central role. In this debate, more articles point to Lula knowing about the situation than not knowing. The main sources that insinuate that Lula knew are quotes from politicians of the then opposition party PSDB, and letters to the editor. On the other hand, Roberto Jefferson (PTB), the whistleblower of the *Mensalão* scandal is the main proponent supporting the notion that Lula did not know about the scheme. *Folha* relays: “Jefferson mantém a versão de que o ex-presidente Lula não sabia do esquema de compra de apoio a seu governo no Congresso” <Jefferson maintains the version that former President Lula did not know about the scheme to buy support for his government in Congress> (“Foi,” 2015).

In contrast, neutral coverage of Dilma does not point so directly to the question of whether she knew about the corruption scandal or not. Instead, the coverage centers on describing her impeachment proceedings and the politicians close to Dilma that are under investigation for involvement in the corruption scheme (Carvalho, 2016; “Investigação,” 2016). For example, news updates on the impeachment proceedings include: “OAB (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil) usará dados da Lava Jato para definir



posição sobre impeachment.” <OAB (Brazil’s National Attorneys Association) will use the *Lava Jato* data to define their position on the impeachment> (“PF investiga,” 2015).

In addition, some anti corruption manifestations related to the *Mensalão* also appear in neutral coverage as they are not directly against Lula. For example, a demonstrator states: “Essa manifestação não é a favor nem contra Lula. O que sabemos é que precisamos construir uma nova alternativa...Brasil sem exclusão, injustiça e Mensalão.” <This demonstration is not for or against Lula. What we do know is that we need to build a new alternative ... Brazil without exclusion, injustice and *Mensalão*> (“Em São Paulo,” 2005). In contrast, however, I could not find any coverage of manifestations related to Dilma that could be considered neutral during the period examined, as coverage of protests against the *Petrolão* is either clearly pro or anti Dilma.

#### *Depiction of the Corruption Scandals*

The second section comprises depictions of the scandals (Figs. 9 & 10). For both cases, the vast majority of the corpus depicts the scandal as occurring within an environment of systemic corruption (*Mensalão* 84% and *Petrolão* 97%). Coverage of the *Mensalão* also presented other alternatives in which 7% portray the scandal as new or unique, 7% call on historical roots to explain the scandal, and 2% point to human nature as a cause of corruption. On the other hand, in the case of the *Petrolão*, historical roots of corruption was the only other factor mentioned, by 3% of articles.

### Depiction of Mensalão Scandal

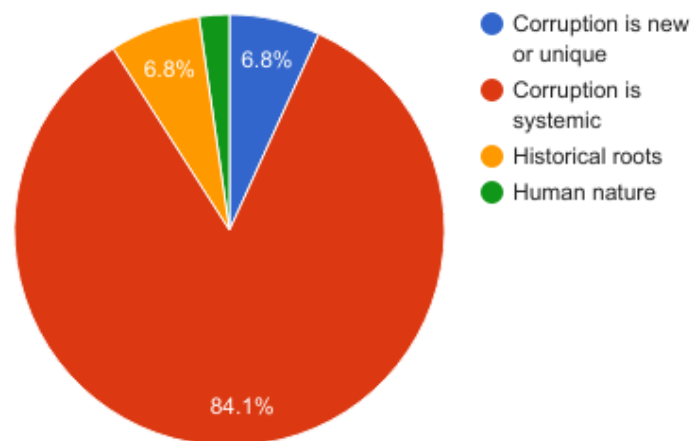


Figure 9: *Folha* Depiction of the *Mensalão* Corruption Scandal

### Depiction of Petrolão Scandal

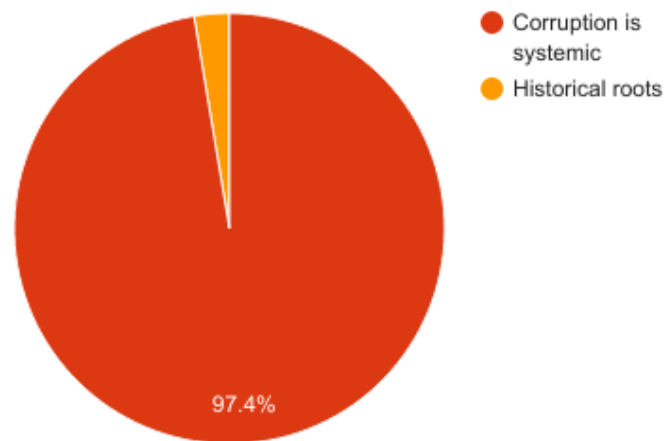


Figure 10: *Folha* Depiction of the *Petrolão* Corruption Scandal

The vast majority of articles in both cases portray the scandal as occurring within a system riddled with corruption. This systemic corruption refers to a situation in which the major state institutions are routinely dominated and utilized by corrupt individuals and groups. In the *Mensalão* case, the political system is depicted as the institution that is consistently dominated by corrupt individuals and groups, as the scheme reaches

across Congress implicating several politicians of various political parties. The main characteristic that creates the impression that corruption is systemic in Brazil is that many articles also reference other corruption schemes, such as: *Caso Cachoeira* (“FHC,” 2012; Ombudsman & Singer, 2012), regional corruption schemes (Rocha, 2012), corruption in the telecommunications sector (Carazzai, 2016), irregularities with campaign financing and *Caixa 2* tax evasion (Ceneviva, 2005; Suwwan, 2005), *Caso dos Correios* (“Fazendo escola,” 2005; “A culpa,” 2005; Guerra, 2012; “Eunício,” 2005; “Delcidio,” 2005; “Contei,” 2005), *Operação Uruguay 2* (Bragon, 2005), *Operação Anaconda* and the selling of judicial sentences (“Juiz,” 2005), the formation of cartels in various industries (“SDE,” 2005), and the corruption that occurred during former President Collor’s government (Bezerra, 2005).

Similarly to the *Mensalão*, the vast majority of the corpus of articles dealing with *Petrolão* points to pervasive systemic corruption. Like the first case, this perception is also created mainly due to references to numerous other corruption schemes including: *Caso do triplex do Guarujá* (“Moro, 2016), bribery to stop the investigations (Carazzai, 2016), *Escandalo de Furnas* (Falcão, 2016), and nine CPI’s set up to investigate corruption scandals in various sectors (“Congresso,” 2016). Other components that insinuate systemic corruption are descriptions of the various contracting companies involved in the scheme, the numerous politicians and businessmen under investigation, and the intricate web of money laundering through international banks.

Another interesting example related to systemic corruption consists of references to the *Mensalão* scandal during the *Petrolão*. This occurs in different ways,

for example, to illustrate that corruption is pervasive across time as some politicians involved in the *Mensalão* are also involved in the *Petrolão* (“Gilmar,” 2016; “Ex-deputado, 2015). One example in which the first scandal is mentioned in the context of the second scandal relates to public opinion, “O Mensalão já tinha chocado a opinião pública; agora, o escândalo do Petrolão, envolvendo propinas que chegam a centenas de milhões de reais, ultrapassou a capacidade de tolerância da opinião pública.” <“The *Mensalão* had already shocked public opinion; now the *Petrolão* scandal, involving bribes that amount to hundreds of millions of *reais*, has surpassed the capacity of the public opinion to tolerate> (Gullar, 2015). On the other hand, the *Mensalão* is also sometimes cited as an example of a past corruption scandal where politicians were eventually held accountable (“Dirceu,” 2015).

#### *Depiction of the Anticorruption Mechanisms*

The corpus tied to the *Petrolão* scandal focused more attention upon coverage of the investigation and trial procedure (75%) than the *Mensalão* corpus (52%) (Figs. 11 & 12). For both cases, the majority of the articles paint the investigations and trial procedure in a positive manner, and in both cases a smaller percentage portray dissatisfaction or critique the punitive process. Positive coverage of the *Lava Jato* investigations (82%) is slightly greater than positive coverage of the *Mensalão* investigative proceedings (69%), and accordingly, critiques to the trial proceedings are slightly greater relating to the *Mensalão* (31%) than to the *Lava Jato/Petrolão* (18%).

### Coverage of Mensalão Investigation and Trial

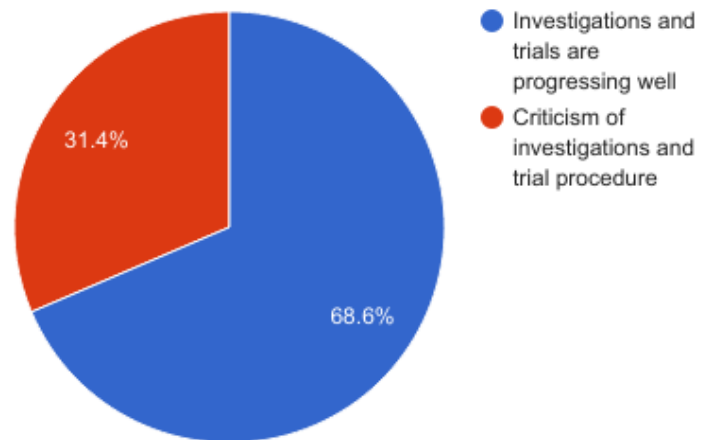


Figure 11: *Folha* Depiction of the *Mensalão* Investigation and Trial

### Coverage of Lava Jato Investigation and Trial

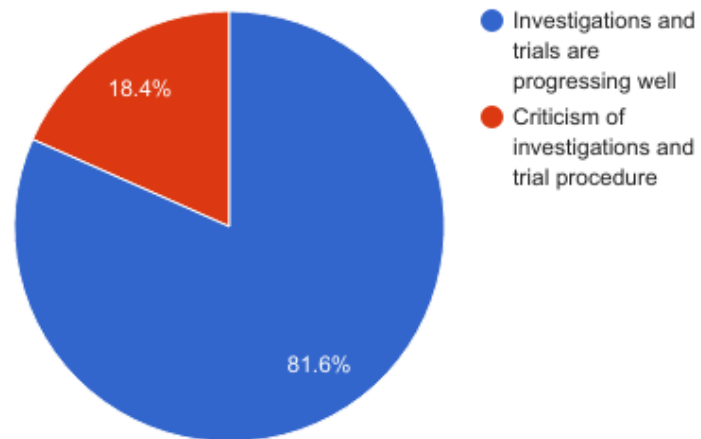


Figure 12: *Folha* Depiction of the *Petrolão* Investigation and Trial

### *Positive Coverage of the Investigations and Trial*

The main areas in which positive coverage of the *Lava Jato* and the *Mensalão* investigation and trial procedure converge are: *Folha* describes new evidence that has been uncovered, applauds quality investigative journalism, praises the transparency of the judges, particularly Sérgio Moro, head of the *Lava Jato*, informs that high profile

politicians and businessmen are being investigated for involvement in the corruption scheme, including Lula, Collor and Cunha, maintains that the procedure holds high profile politicians and businessmen accountable, reports that politicians and businessmen are presenting their testimonies in court, and lastly describes the trial results and those who have been condemned. A prime example of trial approval is: “A comprovação de tantos fatos tão graves, envolvendo simultaneamente a cúpula econômica e política do país, é algo inédito na história.” <The substantiation of so many serious facts, involving simultaneously the economic and political elite of the country, is something unheard of in history> (Carvalho, 2015).

The main areas in which positive coverage of the *Lava Jato* and the *Mensalão* investigation and trial procedure diverge are that the *Petrolão* corpus also applauds how the institutions such as CPIs’ (*Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito*: Parliamentary Inquiry Commission), PF (*Polícia Federal*: Brazilian Federal Police), STF (*Supremo Tribunal Federal*: Brazilian Supreme Court), the *Lava Jato* Task Force, MPF (*Ministério Público Federal*: Federal Public Prosecutor), AGU (*Advocacia-Geral da União*: Federal Attorney General), are working together on the investigation, and how politicians and businessmen are cooperating with the investigations and providing information regarding others involved in the schemes.

#### *Negative Coverage of the Investigations and Trial*

Negative coverage of the investigations and trial procedures is significantly less common than positive coverage in both cases. The main recurring themes include: critiques of the Brazilian Federal Police (PF) in charge of the investigation by portraying them as inadequate, dissatisfaction with the punishments or lack thereof, and

complaints that the trial is progressing too slowly. In the case of the *Lava Jato*, in addition to the areas mentioned above, the corpus also presents criticisms regarding the lack of communication and cooperation between institutions involved in the investigations (Nery, 2015) and comparisons of the *Lava Jato* task force to the military dictatorship (“Foi,” 2015).

#### *Depiction of the Implications of the Corruption Scandals*

In the last section, overall, a greater number of *Mensalão* articles 61% present an analysis of the impacts of the corruption scandals, whereas in the *Lava Jato* corpus only 40% focus on this analysis (Figs. 13 & 14). Across both scandals, the area of greatest emphasis points to the implications that affect institutions (*Mensalão* 44% and *Petrolão* 42%). For the *Mensalão*, the second most discussed aspect is the resulting social impacts of the scandal (34%), whereas for the *Petrolão* scandal, the second most emphasized category relates to economic impact (31%). Articles focusing on the *Mensalão* scandal additionally point to political impact (7%) and ethical impact (3%), whereas the *Lava Jato* corpus does not.

### Depiction of the Greater Impact of the Mensalão

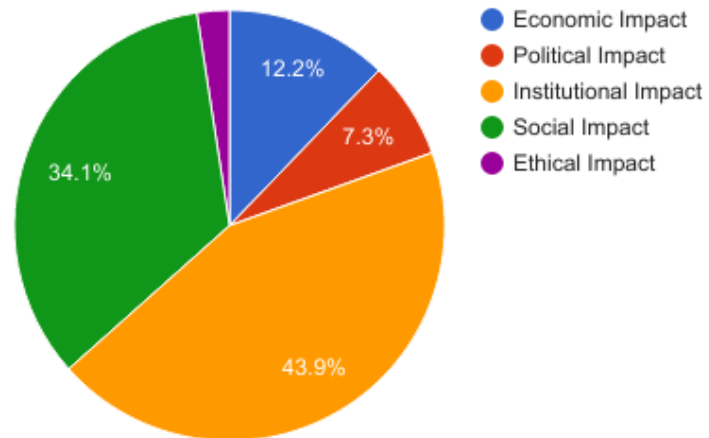


Figure 13: *Folha* Depiction of the Impacts of the *Mensalão* Corruption Scandal

### Depiction of the Greater Impact of the Petrolão

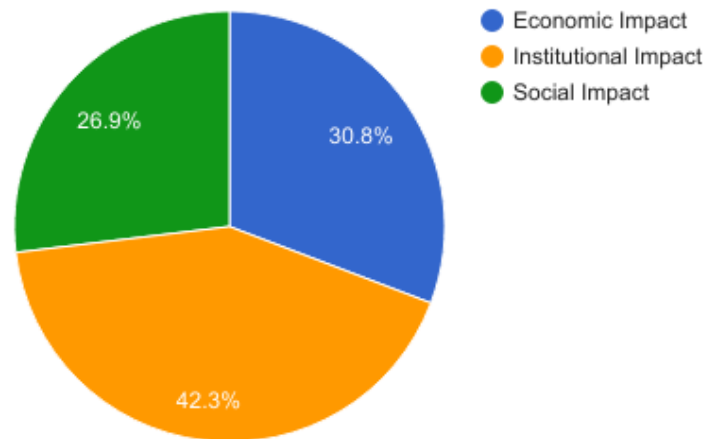


Figure 14: *Folha* Depiction of the Impacts of the *Petrolão* Corruption Scandal

### *Institutional Impact*

In relation to institutional impact (Figs. 15 & 16), a slightly greater percentage of *Mensalão* articles (61%) maintain that corruption threatens institutions, regime legitimacy, or democracy compared to *Petrolão* articles (54.4%). Conversely, a slightly



greater percentage of *Petrolão* articles (45.5%) maintain that democratic institutions are stable despite corruption, compared to the *Mensalão* (39%).

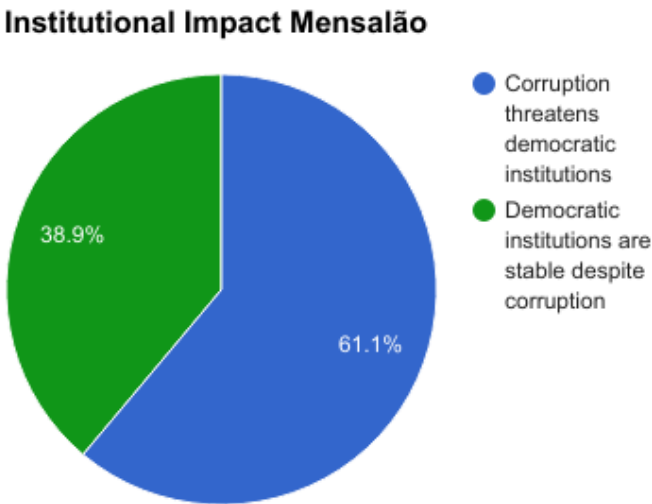


Figure 15: *Folha* Depiction of the Institutional Impacts of the *Mensalão*

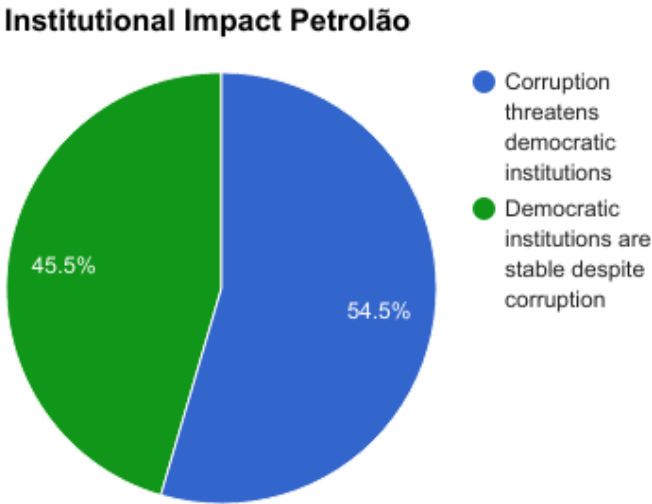


Figure 16: *Folha* Depiction of the Institutional Impacts of the *Petrolão*

*Institutions are Stable Despite Corruption*

The notion that Brazilian democratic institutions are stable despite corruption during the *Mensalão* scandal is mostly based on the consistent perception that

politicians allegedly involved in the scheme are peacefully resigning from power and that the trials demonstrate the institutional strength and capacity of the judiciary and of Brazilian democracy, principally because the trial is setting a precedent to diminish impunity in Brazil. For example, statements about the *Mensalão* trial support the claim that the checks and balances within the democratic system are functioning: “Será um marco histórico que nos guindará a um novo patamar, o de país democrático onde as instituições funcionam. Instituições estas que se pautam por valores e que cobram de seus representantes a honradez de cumprir o que determina a Constituição. Esse é o legado que podemos deixar para o futuro.” <It will be a historical landmark that will bring us to a new level, that of a democratic country where institutions work. Institutions that are based on ethical values and that hold their representatives accountable to the honesty to comply with what the Constitution determines. This is the legacy that we can leave for the future> (Guerra, 2012).

On the other hand, the perspective that democratic institutions are stable despite corruption during the *Petrolão* scandal is created mainly through depictions that the institutions are effectively collaborating together on the investigation and that politicians are being held accountable. For example, the head of the *Lava Jato* task force states in an interview: “Esse crescimento exponencial do caso decorreu, em boa medida, do emprego efetivo de colaborações premiadas pelo Ministério Público. Mas o sucesso também decorre da experiência, da qualidade técnica e da sinergia entre as equipes do Ministério Público, da Polícia Federal e da Receita que trabalham no caso, bem como da atuação firme e imparcial do Judiciário.” <This exponential growth in the case was largely due to the effective use of collaborations (plea bargains) awarded by

the Public Prosecution Service. But success also stems from the experience, technical quality and synergy between the Public Prosecution, Federal Police and IRS working on the case, as well as the firm and impartial performance of the Judiciary> (Carvalho, 2015).

### *Corruption Negatively Impacts Institutions*

For the *Mensalão* case, the main patterns that refer to corruption as a destabilizer consists of *Folha* citing members of the judiciary stating that corruption schemes are detrimental to democratic institutions (“Ministros,” 2012), and calling for political and legislative reforms, particularly related to problematic campaign financing and *caixa dois*, which facilitates tax evasion (Cony, 2012; Vianna, 2005; Ceneviva, 2005). In contrast, the reasoning behind how corruption threatens institutions, regime legitimacy, and democracy is much broader in the *Petrolão* case, and includes: references to Congress attempting to weaken the power of the judiciary, by diminishing their ability to investigate and blocking a package of measures from the *Lava Jato* task force (Bragon, 2016); questioning whether the judiciary can handle the investigations (Bergamo, 2015); questioning how Cunha is leading the impeachment process against Dilma, though he himself is under investigation for corruption and involvement in the *Petrolão* (Franco, 2015), complaints on how the protests have destabilized the government: “Desde os protestos de março, o governo nunca pareceu tão frágil, e o desfecho da crise, tão incerto.” <Since the March protests, the government never seemed so fragile, and the outcome of the crisis, so uncertain > (Franco, 2015); and comments on the urgency of reforms: “A Lava Jato até agora indignou, mas não transformou o país. Se queremos evitar que a história se repita, precisamos de mudanças

legislativas urgentes sobre o processo político e o sistema de Justiça criminal.” <*Lava Jato* so far has caused indignation, but has not transformed the country. If we want to prevent history from repeating itself, we need urgent legislative changes in the political process and the criminal justice system> (Carvalho, 2015).

### *Economic Impact*

In relation to the effects of corruption on the economy (Figs. 17 & 18), the *Petrolão* corpus placed an emphasis on the economic impact more often (31% of articles) compared to the *Mensalão* corpus (12% of articles). Those writing about the economic impact of the *Mensalão* tend to emphasize that the economy is doing well despite corruption (60% of articles), while only 12.5% of articles on economic impact depicted the economy as withstanding the *Petrolão* scandal. On the other hand, a greater percentage of articles discussing the economy focus on how corruption negatively affects the economy in the *Petrolão* corpus (87.5%) compared to the *Mensalão* (40%).

### Economic Impact Mensalão

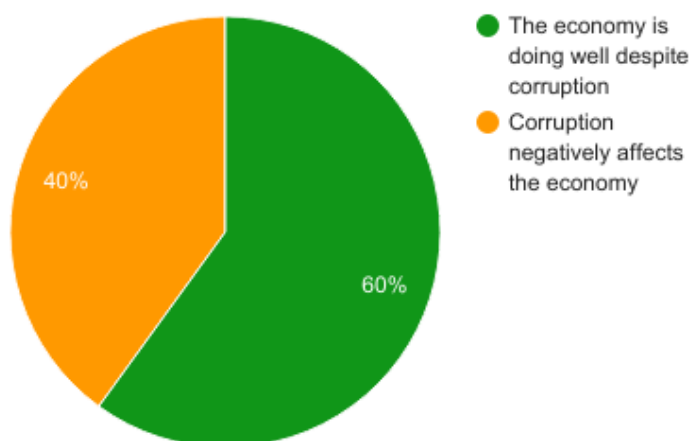


Figure 17: *Folha* Depiction of the Economic Impacts of the *Mensalão*

### Economic Impact Petrolão

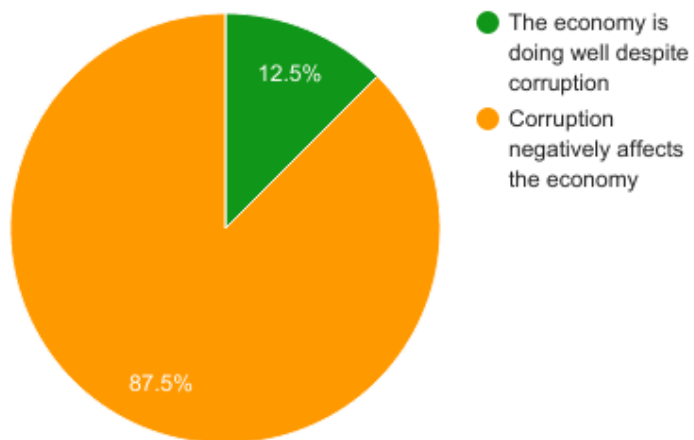


Figure 18: *Folha* Depiction of the Economic Impacts of the *Petrolão*

For the *Mensalão* corpus, examples of the impact of corruption on the Brazilian economy involve mostly positive coverage of measures taken by the finance minister and the president of the central bank to minimize the economic impacts of the corruption allegations, and the detrimental effect of corruption on attracting foreign investment. In contrast, for the *Petrolão* scandal, the discourse on the economic impact revolves mainly around how the situation affects *Petrobras* and the other contracting companies involved in the scheme. Only one article presents the economy as doing well despite the corruption scheme, where the president of *Petrobras* maintains that selling the company assets will improve the company governance and stabilize the situation (“Vitrines,” 2012). All other articles point to the detrimental effects that corruption poses for the economy. Coverage centers mostly upon *Petrobras* and how due to the corruption scandal and the *Lava Jato* investigation the oil company lost billions in revenue (Vettorazzo & Bercito, 2015), is losing its ability to conduct international business (Pamplona, 2016), lost stock value (Landim, Lima, & Nery 2015), and is forced to make cuts and fire workers (Pitombo, 2015). Other comments center on how the scandal ruins the reputation of several major contracting companies (“Três,” 2015), which impedes their ability to finance construction projects (Pamplona, 2016), and on how they lose share value after politicians and businessmen are arrested (“Dólar, 2015).

### *Social Impact*

Lastly, the main pattern that emerged in both cases involving social impact is that societal resentment is fostered through the discourse that voters should feel betrayed because the government is stealing money from them, and that the money stolen must be returned. In the *Mensalão* articles, this pattern was often times

propagated through religious figureheads that speak on the importance of public engagement in demanding the end of corrupt practices. For the *Petrolão*, a similar attitude of discontent emerges, where common themes reported include insinuation that society must put pressure to impeach Dilma in order to rid the country of corruption, and that Brazilian citizens should know all the facts.

## Chapter 5: Analysis

### Analysis of the Role of Economy and Public Opinion

The results of my research indicate that there are two ways by which an economic downturn can affect public opinion in response to a corruption scandal. The first is that economic downturn makes citizens more critical of the government and more likely to blame politicians for corruption scandals in terms of approval ratings. And the second is that the media exacerbates the situation when it links an economic slowdown with the corruption scandal.

The public opinion data revealed that during the *Mensalão* scandal, citizens did not view the economy as a major issue and were pleased with Lula's management of the economy. In contrast during the *Petrolão* scandal, Brazilians were extremely concerned with the economic crisis and maintained negative perceptions of Dilma's management of the economy, blaming corruption as one of the main reasons for the economic downturn. These observations support my hypothesis and are consistent with the existing literature when it states that public perceptions are impacted negatively during economy slowdown and positively during economic prosperity. The stage is set for the media to frame the situation.

Similarly, the content analysis confirms my assumptions regarding the role of the economy in shaping perceptions about corruption because the results indicate that when the economy is doing well, the economic impact is not prominent on the media agenda, but when the economy is doing poorly, the economic impact becomes a more significant priority upon the media agenda.



The level of importance on the media agenda is evident as the *Petrolão* corpus placed a higher emphasis on discussing the economic impacts of the corruption scandal. This is achieved as a greater number of articles discuss this relationship: (*Petrolão*: 31% vs. *Mensalão*: 12%). In this sense, the media sets the agenda that the economy is an important factor related to the *Petrobras* scandal. On the other hand, since there are not many articles directly discussing the economy in relation to the *Mensalão* scandal, it can be concluded that the media is not setting the agenda for the public, thus indicating to readers that the economy was not a pressing concern generally.

In terms of framing how the public should perceive the topic, during the *Mensalão* scandal the media frames the situation as positive. More articles (60%), maintain that posture because the economy is stable despite corruption, and only (40%) point to corruption as detrimental to the economy. In the *Petrolão* scandal the pattern is reversed, with 87.5% of the articles that mention the economy maintaining that there is a negative impact, and only 12.5% of the articles propose that the economy is doing well despite corruption. The fact that there is a greater divergence in positive versus negative views in the second case, and a more balanced distribution between positive and negative in the first case, also points to a greater significance of the economic impact as central to the discourse in times of economic downturn.

Thus, these patterns confirm my previous assumptions that in a time of economic prosperity, the economy becomes less important when discussing issues of corruption and the two tend to be viewed as separate entities, whereas in times of economic misfortune, the discourse shifts to place a greater emphasis upon the detrimental impacts of corruption. The amount of emphasis and the type of perspective

propagated in turn impacts public opinion. Those who read the news in times of economic prosperity will internalize that corruption plays a minimal role in shaping the course of the economy, whereas in times of economic crisis, the discourse links the two together and the public will internalize that corruption holds tremendous detrimental impacts to the economy.

In terms of the case studies, Brazil was experiencing an economic crisis during the *Petrolão* scandal, and the results indicate that greater emphasis was placed upon the negative effects of corruption on the economy. In contrast, the nation enjoyed economic stability and growth during the *Mensalão* scandal, and the results indicate that less emphasis was placed on the implications of corruption for the economy. When the economy was doing poorly, as during the second scandal, the economic impact becomes a greater focus of public opinion, whereas when the economy was doing well, as during the first scandal, the economic impact is less likely to be a central focus of public opinion.

These relationships are intriguing because corruption is always detrimental to the economy. The link between corruption and the economy becomes more pronounced in the discourse when the country faces an economic crisis, but is neglected in favor of placing greater emphasis on other topics in times of economic growth. This process can be utilized to minimize the detrimental economic impact of corruption scandals in times of prosperity, or on the other hand, be overly exploited in times of economic crisis to overshadow other important factors such as the underlying causes behind corruption mechanisms.

## **Analysis of Coverage of Key Political Figures**

The media content analysis yielded mixed results regarding my original assumptions of the significance of the key political figures in conjunction with their respective corruption scandals. In terms of the depiction and perception of the presidential figures, the evidence suggests a significant impact in relation to framing theory through attribute setting but surprisingly, less of a presence of agenda setting theory because overall the percentage of articles that discuss the figures in relation to the scandals was not the majority.

Lula was extremely popular during the first scandal and was elected to a second term even after the scandal broke. It was only after the trial started at a later date that public opinion from certain sectors of society began to turn against him. The media content analysis parallels this trend as there was more neutral and positive coverage combined than negative coverage. However, coverage was not as positive as I had expected, as there was more negative (31%) than positive coverage (19%). Dilma, on the other hand, was vastly unpopular when the second corruption scandal was revealed, and her popularity continued to decline until she was eventually impeached from office. The media content analysis also parallels this trend as the majority of her coverage was negative (63%), exceeding both positive (15%) and neutral (22%) coverage combined.

In this sense, the news articles frame Lula more neutrally and Dilma more negatively. Neutral coverage is largely composed by the discourse of questioning whether Lula knew or did not know about the corruption scheme, which is more critical than inflammatory. On the other hand, Dilma is clearly framed as losing popular

support because of consistent reporting on the numerous protests calling for her impeachment, which is more inflammatory than critical.

This confirms the notion that the media frames perceptions of Lula and Dilma that parallel the public opinion poll data reflecting presidential popularity or lack thereof. However what surprised me was the lack of agenda setting placing Lula and Dilma as central to the corruption scandals. The politicians are the focus of less than half of the articles analyzed for each respective scandal.

The unexpected results from the content analysis suggest that the news articles do not set the agenda as prominently as I had anticipated, in the sense that overall coverage mentioning the presidential figures in relation to the corruption schemes do not appear as a vast majority in either case. Comparing the two figures, the media agenda sets Lula more prominently on the public agenda as being linked to the first corruption scheme, since 48% of the articles discuss him. The link between Dilma and the second scandal is slightly weaker and she is not set on the agenda as prominently, as a slightly smaller percentage of the articles (42%) discuss Dilma in relation to the *Petrolão*.

Though I had hypothesized that in the public opinion both presidential figures would be perceived as central to the scandals, the media does not depict Dilma to be as strongly tied to the *Petrobras* scandal as they do with Lula in the face of the *Mensalão* scandal. For both cases this link is not as strong as I had anticipated, as I had assumed that the key politicians would appear much more prominently in the forefront of the discussion surrounding the corruption scandals.

Since the news articles do not set the agenda for Lula and Dilma as central to the corruption schemes, it can be concluded that other factors may have contributed more to determining the variation and nature of public backlash directed at these individuals than newspaper coverage, as I discuss below.

### **Analysis of the Role of Type of Corruption**

The existing literature on corruption would classify the two scandals of interest as belonging to the same “type,” entailing grand, high level, political corruption that is systemic. I hypothesized that the media and popular discussions of the scandals would reveal that the public perceived them as distinct: whereas corruption associated with the *Mensalão* would be seen as corruption aimed at greasing the political wheels in Congress, the corruption associated with the *Petrobras* scandal would be seen as being more about personal enrichment. However, evidence from demonstrators, protests, and manifestations reveals that the public did not distinguish between different types of corruption. Instead demonstrators are fed up with corruption in Brazil in general, blame the situation on the political leaders, and demand an end to impunity, evident through cries for Dilma’s impeachment and Lula’s prison sentence. Thus, the different type of corruption involved in the two scandals does not help to explain the varying levels of public backlash. In relation to the news media content analysis, the articles revealed that both cases are described as occurring within an environment conducive to systemic corruption. Whereas in neither case the media portrayed the corruption as acceptable (generally or in the public’s view), the coverage did point to diverging intents of the corruption schemes.

The content analysis results indicate that the media depicts both cases as occurring within an environment of systemic corruption, due mainly to the numerous corruption schemes that appear either in conjunction to the main corruption scheme, or come to light as the investigation progresses. In both cases the discourse maintains that the scandal is unprecedented and is the biggest scandal in Brazilian history.

The results also indicate a separation between different types of corruption, describing the first case as corruption for political purposes and the second case as corruption for personal gain; however, the varying degrees of acceptability for these different types of corruption remains obscure. The results indicate that there is a difference in relation to the reporting on the intent of the corruption scandal. In the first case, the discourse shapes the scandal as having a specific purpose, which is to buy votes in congress to gain a majority to pass legislation. This is also illustrated through a greater emphasis on an analysis of the causes of the corruption scheme. In the second case, there is less of a discussion surrounding the intent of the corruption scheme, rather the focus is upon describing the vast amounts of money involved, from which contracting companies benefited, as well as reporting on which politicians and businessmen are standing trial and being sentenced to prison. Little to no analysis is presented surrounding the causes of the situation.

Though the types of corruption are presented differently, there is little evidence to suggest that the first type of corruption is more acceptable or tolerated by the public than the second, as I had imagined would be the case.

## **Analysis of the Role of Media Agenda Setting and Framing**

The large quantity of articles published that discuss both corruption scandals over time confirms that the media sets the agenda that corruption is an important issue to the public in relation to both corruption scandals. The *Petrolão* scandal has had consistent coverage from the year the scandal was revealed in 2014 throughout the ongoing investigation procedure. Similarly, continuous coverage is evident across time in relation to the *Mensalão* scandal as the publication of articles commenting on it range from the scandal's initial revelation in 2005 through the years leading up to the trial in 2012, and continues to this year. This consistency in reporting means that the issue of corruption is still relevant to the media agenda, and in turn remains important to the public agenda as well. This agenda setting function is evident in both scandals.

Taking the analysis to a deeper level upon an examination of second level agenda setting, the literature emphasizes how the media sets the agenda but does not fully address under what conditions framing takes place to change public opinion. The data indicates that variation exists in levels of media framing across scandals. My content analysis reveals that framing was more prevalent in the coverage of the *Mensalão* than on the *Petrolão*, as the media served a more analytical function which helped to shape public perceptions in the first case, whereas the media played a more informative rather than framing role in the second case.

This framing function is evident as more coverage of the *Mensalão* scandal (61%) pointed to an analysis of the greater significance and impact of the scandal, whereas in the *Petrolão* case only 40% attempt to provide this type of analysis. This means that the *Mensalão* corpus placed greater priority on shaping public opinion in

relation to the detrimental impact that corruption holds for destabilizing Brazilian democratic institutions. In addition, this space was utilized as a platform to call for urgent political and judicial reforms to curb future corruption practices. Even in the face of media frames, public backlash in the face of the *Mensalão* scandal was minimal, suggesting that the positive economic environment and the nature of the corruption may have had more significant effects on the level and nature of public opinion and collective action.

On the other hand, coverage of the *Petrolão* scandal was more focused on documenting the steps of the trial procedure in relation to positive coverage of the judges, the continuous new pieces of crucial evidence emerging, and the flow of high level politicians and businessmen sentenced to prison. The fact that the *Petrolão* represents a second corruption scandal of even greater magnitude than the *Mensalão* – which was still fresh in the public’s memory because of the 2012 trial – might have exacerbated public reaction independent of media framing because it pointed to the lack of steadfast anti-corruption mechanisms implemented to break the continuous cycle of systemic corruption.

Independently of the reasons, it is clear that the media largely played an informative role during the *Petrobras* scandal and undertook very little second level agenda setting, suggesting that an important area for future research is understanding the variation in the degree and nature of media agenda setting across different time periods and news stories.

As previously mentioned, Brazilians typically accept corruption as unavoidable and pervasive. This notion is not unique to Brazil, and also prevails in other countries,



especially in environments where the mechanisms and resources to effectively combat corruption are inefficient. However, the Brazilian corruption cases reveal that despite this view, citizens can only endure corruption for so long. Even though corruption is seen as unavoidable, the fact that knowledge and information about the corruption schemes was made readily available to the public through the news media coverage and framing, contributed to a heightened sense of urgency previously undemonstrated. The vast majority of Brazilians are outraged with the situation that characterizes the intricate web of systemic corruption within the Brazilian government, which has reached absurd and almost incomprehensible proportions. The cases suggest that citizens cannot endure pervasive corruption endlessly; at some point silence is no longer tolerated as a viable option and society mobilizes to demand change.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis investigated the two largest corruption scandals in Brazilian history that have shocked public opinion and contributed to a presidential impeachment. The focus of this research attempts to understand under what conditions do corruption scandals generate large-scale public backlash. I have proposed that the key factors that shape public discontent are: the type of corruption as defined by intent (political expediency or personal enrichment), the broader context particularly the state of the economy, and the media coverage regarding how the media sets the public agenda and frames the scandals. This study was accomplished through a news media content analysis of *Folha de São Paulo*, one of Brazil's largest and most popular news outlets, through analysis and coding of 132 articles covering these corruption scandals.

The results are varied and do not always support my initial hypothesis, but serve to shed light upon the gaps in the existing literature that fail to point out the variation in terms of when second level agenda setting comes into play and the impact that different types of corruption may produce.

Overall the media coverage of both corruption scandals suggests that the institutions are functioning despite corruption, that the judiciary and police are investigating corruption and holding politicians accountable, but also that corruption is a major issue that threatens Brazilian systems and institutions and must be dealt with properly. In both cases, first order agenda setting is taking place – the media are signaling to the public that corruption is an important issue to which Brazilians should be paying attention. Yet the degree of second level agenda setting undertaken by media outlets varies across the scandals. The results support the notion that framing does occur

in relation to the discourse on key political figures involved in the scandals and the significance or lack thereof related to the state of the economy. Yet framing does not come into play in relation to shaping opinions regarding the type of corruption involved in the scandals. This points to how the media plays a different role in relation to each corruption scandal, where in the first case, the media plays a more analytical role, whereas in the second case the media plays a more informative role.

There are several possible explanations for why second level agenda setting was less prevalent in relation to the second case than the first case. This trend could prevail because the second case is still ongoing so there is less room for analysis and a greater need for information as new milestones present themselves. In contrast, since more time passed since the *Mensalão* scandal broke until the *juízo* trial procedure, there is more room to analyze and critically evaluate past occurrences in light of the current situation. Another reason may be that the *Petrolão* case seems more complicated because there are more intricate layers to unravel and a greater variety of players ranging from politicians to businessmen, contracting companies, and national and international banks. In this sense, there may be a greater need for information on the role of each player involved, rather than to frame the situation in a specific manner. Similarly, it is possible that as social media has become the sphere where opinions are expressed, traditional news media outlets have started to specialize in informative, unbiased coverage. Facebook groups that organize events and protests thread posts that allow for debate and proposing opinions, which may be more influential in shaping public opinion than newspaper articles. All these factors may contribute to explain why

there is less evidence of second level agenda setting in relation to the *Petrolão* corruption scandal.

As for the economic aspect, my research indicates that in Brazil the state of the economy is a strong determining factor that shapes public perceptions either concerning the importance of corruption as a major issue that the country must deal with, or whether corruption is relatively overlooked and other issues are deemed more important on the public agenda. To test whether this trend holds true more generally, further research could be conducted to compare the Brazilian case with corruption scandals being investigated across other Latin American nations with similar contexts of economic growth or economic prosperity. For example, another study could compare the situation with Chile, a nation that historically possesses the lowest levels of corruption in Latin America and also experiences economic stability, or with Venezuela, a country that is currently suffering a political and economic crisis.

Regarding the third component, the results indicate that the media depicted the different types of corruption, however this was not enough for the public to perceive the scandals in vastly distinct manners, and instead protestors demanded the end of corruption as an all-encompassing term. The fact that the public did not distinguish between the different types of corruption associated with the cases examined poses interesting implications for devising strategies to combat corruption and for politicians to gain or maintain public support. Unanswered questions from this section include: How do public perceptions of corruption shape initiatives to combat corruption? Should a nation tackle corruption in the same manner regardless of the type of

corruption involved? Does the type of corruption shape public perceptions in other countries and under other contexts?

Overall, the results of my research indicate that the type of corruption was not seen as maintaining an important impact on public opinion, media did not play as fundamental a role in shaping public perceptions as expected, and only the economic climate was discovered to be significant. As there are many factors involved in shaping public opinion, it remains to be explored, which other factors are more important in shaping public backlash. I am also interested in the gender dimension and in investigating how gender roles may have shaped public opinion differently in the Lula and Dilma contexts. An unanswered question in this regard: to what extent do gender roles impact public perceptions of corruption scandals? In addition to the gender dimension, another interesting factor to explore would be the differing personalities of the two politicians; Lula is an extremely charismatic individual, whereas Dilma's public speaking skills are lacking (as countless memes and YouTube videos depict). It would be interesting to investigate what roles social media depictions and humor play in shaping public perceptions of the politicians and the corruption scandals.

This also opens up what could be done to further expand upon my findings. First, I would have liked to include different news sources, including a strongly conservative source and a left leaning one to better understand the ideological dimension involved in news media coverage of the corruption scandals. I would also suggest propagating the investigation further to encompass social media platforms to understand how social media shapes public opinion in relation to corruption scandals.

On a final note, although my hypotheses were not always supported, and the factors that impact the differing levels of public backlash against the two corruption scandals still need to be further investigated, an important take away message is that although Brazil experiences systemic corruption, the elements seem to be present to move forward to combat corruption. The principal institutions that serve as checks and balances upon the government are the judiciary, the media, and civil society. Ideally, freedom of press and investigative journalism that exposes corruption, an effective and independent judiciary that convicts corrupt practices, and an active civil society that demands higher government transparency and accountability, can all function in conjunction to mitigate corruption. The fact that these three elements appeared within the context of the *Mensalão* and the *Petrolão* corruption scandals can be viewed as an important sign of progress within the framework of a properly functioning democratic system. The media investigated and published news articles exposing the corruption scandals without government censorship. Once the events were brought to public attention, sectors of the population mobilized and voiced their frustrations with the government through mass protests. The subsequent public outrage that the scandals generated points to how the standards for assessing politicians have risen, not only in Brazil but across Latin America, as citizens reject the longstanding traditions of impunity and demand that politicians be held accountable. The scandals also tested the efficiency of the judiciary system, which in Brazil seems to be proving itself capable. The federal investigations resulted in prosecutions and convictions of high profile politicians and businessmen, which is an important step in tackling corruption.

The success of the investigations and trials are mirrored not only in the Brazilian news media but also recognized internationally as the Operation Car Wash Task Force (*Força-Tarefa Lava Jato*) won Transparency International's 2016 Anti-Corruption Award for their efforts to end endemic corruption in Brazil. The *Petrobras* case is one of the world's biggest corruption scandals and the ongoing *Lava Jato* investigation since April 2014 has resulted in over 240 criminal charges and 118 convictions, including some of Brazil's more powerful political and economic elite (TI, 2016). This means that though the problem of systemic corruption is deeply engrained into the Brazilian political system, the anticorruption mechanisms seem to be functioning and hopefully can continue to improve the situation and meet the society's demands.

## Glossary

**AGU:** *Advocacia-Geral da União* - Federal Attorney General.

**Bribery:** An exchange between two participants, in which the one who bribes receives a good or service that would otherwise have not been granted, and the one who accepts the bribe is an official or holds a position of trust.

**BRICS:** Top five emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

**Caixa 2:** Uncontested and undeclared financial resources or electoral donations utilized as a form of tax evasion and similar to a slush fund.

**Collor de Mello, Fernando:** Former Brazilian president who resigned in the midst of his impeachment trial for corruption (campaign financing issues) in 1992.

**CPI:** *Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito* – Parliamentary Inquiry Commission, a commission led by the legislative branch in order to investigate allegations of irregularities within the public sector.

**CPI:** Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, an annual ranking of countries based upon perceived levels of corruption.

**Cunha, Eduardo:** A Brazilian politician and Ex-President of the Chamber of Deputies (Speaker of the House) who initiated Dilma's impeachment process. In March 2017 he was found guilty of corruption, tax evasion, and money laundering related to the *Petrolão* corruption scheme and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

**Datafolha:** A Brazilian polling institute that conducts public opinion surveys for *Grupo Folha* (the media conglomerate that publishes *Folha de São Paulo*).

**Folha de São Paulo:** One of the most popular media outlets in Brazil from the state of São Paulo, with a center-left ideological orientation.

**IBGE:** *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* - The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, a federal agency that collects national statistical data.

**IBOPE:** *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística* - Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, a major polling institution in Brazil.

**Jefferson, Roberto:** A Brazilian politician from the PTB - Brazilian Labor Party, and the whistle blower of the *Mensalão* scandal.

**Kickback:** A bribe in which the money is paid after the service has been rendered.

**LAPOP:** Latin American Public Opinion Project, a research project through Vanderbilt University that focuses on public opinion surveys.



**Latinobarómetro:** *Opinión Pública Latinoamericana* - Latin American Public Opinion, a public opinion survey database that originates in Chile.

**Lava Jato:** “Operation Car Wash” the ongoing federal investigation following the *Petrolão* corruption scandal, carried out by the Federal Police of Brazil and commanded judicially by Judge Sérgio Moro.

**Mensalão:** A corruption scandal that broke in 2005, involving bribery and vote buying to form political coalitions.

**Money Laundering:** Concealment of the origin of illegally obtained funds, typically via transferring money through businesses or foreign bank accounts.

**Moro, Sergio:** Brazilian Federal Judge, head of the *Lava Jato* trial.

**MPF:** *Ministério Público Federal* - Federal Public Prosecutor

**O Globo:** The top media outlet in Brazil from the state of Rio de Janeiro that maintains a conservative ideological orientation.

**Petrobras:** Brazil’s largest national oil company, at the center of the *Petrolão* corruption scandal.

**Petrolão:** A corruption scandal involving *Petrobras* and kickbacks for overinflated contracts.

**PF:** *Polícia Federal* – The Brazilian Federal Police, involved in the corruption investigations.

**Pork barrel politics:** Refers to the appropriation of government spending for localized projects to bring money into a certain representative’s district in order to gain their support in the form of campaign financing or votes.

**PSDB:** *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* - Brazilian Social Democracy Party.

**PT:** *Partido dos Trabalhadores* - The Workers Party, the political party that both Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff represent.

**PTB:** *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* - The Brazilian Labor Party.

**Rousseff, Dilma:** Brazil’s first female president. Elected in 2011 and impeached in 2016 before the end of her second term in office. Tied to the *Petrobras* corruption scandal.

**Temer, Michel.** The current President of Brazil who took office after Dilma’s impeachment as he was the Vice President. His government is center-right. He has been cited for involvement in the *Petrolão* corruption scandal but currently maintains presidential immunity from investigation.

**da Silva, Luiz Inácio Lula:** Brazil's president from 2003-2010 who was tied to the *Mensalão* corruption scandal. Referred to as Lula.

**STF:** *Supremo Tribunal Federal* – The Brazilian Federal Supreme Court.

**WGI:** Worldwide Governance Indicators, a World Bank database that measures the quality of governance through six primary indicators of good governance.

## Appendix 1: Content Analysis News Media Articles

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